Marianne Thirnie 1796

AGATHA;

OR,

A Narrative

OF

Recent Events.

A NOVEL.

In three Volumes,

VOL. III.

Bid them be chaste, be innocent, like thee;
Bid them in duty's Sphere as meekly move—

Mason.

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1796

BRITISH MUSEUM

AGATHA.

CHAP. I.

IT was now evening, and the picturesque beauties of the scenery around were rendered more romantic by the "sober twilight," darkening the shades of green, and, by half concealing the distant view, giving scope to the imagination to delineate beauties created by itself, a little world of its own, superior to reality.—To a mind ill at ease, there is something in the mild gloom of evening, which, like the sympathizing voice of a congenial friend, by gently soothing dispels our sorrows, or, if they yet remain, softens them into a melancholy rather sweet than painful; while

the broad glare of day, like the ill-judged efforts of the gay and thoughtleſs to diſſipate diſtreſſes they are incapable of feeling, but encreaſes the dejection it would ſeem to remove. Agatha felt its ſoothing influence—her mind grew more ſerene, and pointing out to Hammond the various beauties around them, loſt by degrees in the pleaſing contemplation the remembrance of her troubles; but weak and exhauſted through want of food, long before they reached the deſtined village, ſhe was too feeble to proceed. A cottage, to whoſe inhabitants Hammond was a ſtranger, was in ſight, and as Agatha was unable to walk farther that night, neceſſity compelled him to ſeek refuge there. After reſting a few minutes therefore, he again ſupported her tottering ſteps till they reached the cottage. They ſtopped for ſome minutes at a window, the ivy which half covered it concealing them from view, in order to take a view of the inhabitants before they ventured to apply to them for protection.

At a diſtant corner of the room, by a candle which ſhe ſeemed that moment to have lighted,

lighted, ſat a beautiful girl about nineteen making lace. Over a ſmall fire on the oppoſite ſide, an old woman, apparently her mother, was buſied in preparing ſupper for her family. A middle-aged man ſat near her, engaged in converſation with a youth about twelve years old, who appeared to be his ſon. "I would have killed the villains!" exclaimed the youth, in reply to ſome anecdote his father ſeemed to have been relating. "Peace! "for Heaven's ſake, Jeanot Pierre," ſaid the beautiful girl, lifting up her face from her work, "you know not who may hear you. "My dear father, why will you, when you "know his temper, repeat ſtories to him "which may ruin us all?"——"I do not "indeed, wiſh him to ſpeak with ſo much "vehemence," replied her father; "but he "muſt learn the difference between virtue "and vice: he muſt hate the perſecutors, "pity the perſecuted, and, if neceſſary, ſa-"crifice his own life in their defence.——" "Alas!" replied the girl, "what can Jeanot "Pierre do, or you my father, or both toge-"ther?——Remember my mother and me,

" and do not abandon *us* to avenge the cauſe " of ſtrangers."

Agatha and Hammond liſtened no longer; what they had heard, with the intereſting appearance of every one they ſaw, left them no cauſe for heſitation.

The door was a-jar, and Hammond puſhing it gently open, accoſted the little family with that air of reſpect which the appearance of virtue, in whatever ſtation found, never fails to excite; and in reply to his requeſt for leave to paſs that night at leaſt under their roof, received a welcome as chearful as it was ſincere. The youth with ſtudious attention immediately brought chairs for the gueſts, while his ſiſter put down her work, and ſpreading a coarſe but clean cloth on the table, aſſiſted her mother in the preparations for ſupper.

" We knew not an hour ago, my Marga- " ret," ſaid the maſter of the houſe addreſſing himſelf to his wife as they ſat down to table, " we knew not that we ſhould have the hap- " pineſs of theſe gueſts to ſhare our humble " meal with us; and never, O! never, added

" he

" he with warmth, ſhall the hope of reward,
" or fear of puniſhment, induce me to cloſe
" my doors on the ſtranger, and to deny my-
" ſelf this firſt of bleſſings."

" Heaven forbid!" ſaid Agatha, " that
" your hoſpitality ſhould endanger your ſafe-
" ty!"

" Fear nothing," replied St. Valorie, " they
" know I have courage to defend myſelf, and
" dare not attack me; beſides, I have ano-
" ther and a better ſecurity—I have no pro-
" perty to make it worth their while.—Won-
" der not, when I aſſure you, that I was
" among the firſt and warmeſt champions for
" liberty, till liberty became ferocity. I ſaw
" with pleaſure my countrymen ſhake off the
" yoke under which they had groaned for
" ages. I exulted in the proſpect of the
" Gabelle *, and every other heavy and un-
" juſt impoſt being at an end, the extortions
" of Farmers General aboliſhed, and the
" wings of Kingly power prudently clipped:
" but there I would have ſtopped—and did

* Duty on Salt.

" ſtop myſelf; nor will I abet by my coun-
" tenance, trifling as is my power or in-
" fluence, deeds at which human nature re-
" coils, and at the bare thought of which my
" very ſoul ſinks within me.—To the deſire
" of liberty I was ſtimulated by the misfor-
" tunes of my family; and perhaps we are
" never ſo zealous in a public cauſe as when
" we are goaded on by private injuries. I
" longed to ſee the day, when mild and equi-
" table laws ſhould take place of the ſevere
" code which condemns the innocent deſ-
" cendants of the criminal to perpetual ob-
" loquy, and, bereaves them of a property
" they have not deſerved to forfeit. My fa-
" ther's father committed a crime, which,
" though not of the blackeſt die, brought
" him to the ſcaffold. His eſtates were in
" conſequence forfeited, his name rendered
" infamous, and his family degraded to the
" rank of Plebeians. My father, who was
" old enough to be ſenſible of the fall of his
" fortunes, never recovered it; it caſt a gloom
" over his mind, which time, inſtead of diſ-
" pelling, ſerved but to encreaſe, and which

" deſtroyed

" deſtroyed every comfort yet within his
" reach. In education only he was enabled
" to raiſe his children to the rank from which
" he had fallen—and this was his pride.
" Every thing he had himſelf acquired, he
" tranſmitted to me: but I have not believed
" it prudent to act the ſame by *my* children.
" I have taught them to diſtinguiſh between
" virtue and vice, but, at the ſame time, have
" given to their minds only that moderate de-
" gree of refinement, which, without teach-
" ing them to ſoar beyond their ſtation,
" makes them chearful and happy in it, and
" gives them a few innocent reſources in their
" leiſure hours. Marianne reads tolerably
" well, and is ſufficiently accompliſhed to be
" regarded with reſpect, though not enough
" ſo to excite envy among her aſſociates:
" Jeanot Pierre the ſame. But what do I
" ſay? Society is now at an end; all its bonds
" are broken—and the neighbour and the
" friend are become the ſpy and informer."

Hammond on enquiry learned from St. Valorie, that Morèe, the man whom he had wounded, was recovered, and that all purſuit

after himſelf was at an end. The greateſt riſk in purſuing their journey, was now, therefore, over; but St. Valorie adviſed Agatha to change her dreſs before ſhe travelled further, and Marianne promiſed to aſſiſt in equipping her as a female peaſant, under which diſguiſe ſhe might paſs unnoticed, and no one would fear to receive her as a gueſt. It was immediately determined that Agatha and Hammond ſhould remain at St. Valorie's cottage as long as was neceſſary for this preparation, which probably would not detain them many days.—A bed was prepared for Hammond, and Agatha ſhared that of Marianne, whoſe artleſs manners, and natural ſerenity of temper, rendered her converſation always pleaſing.

"It has often ſurprized me," ſaid Marianne to Agatha as they ſat at work the next morning, buſied in preparing Agatha's new garb, "it has often ſurprized me, that any "one can conſent to become a nun; to give "up dancing—and then to loſe all hopes of "having a lover—I could bear any thing but "that."

"You then have a lover?" replied Agatha.

"Not now, but I had once."

"And you are ſeparated!"

"O! yes, and have been for a twelve-
"month."

"And do you ſtill grieve at the loſs?"

"O! No—far from it; I did indeed at
"firſt, as well I might. La Tour was a
"young man that any woman muſt have
"loved; he danced admirably, played on the
"violin, ſung near fifty ſongs, and was be-
"ſides very good-tempered and induſtrious;
"and for two whole years we were conſtant
"to each other. I ſpotted him a handker-
"chief in my hair, and he gave me a work-
"baſket of his own making, for he was very
"ingenious."

"And what divided you?"

"He ſaw ſome one elſe he liked better."

"That was hard indeed."

"It was rather ſo, but I could not help it,
"nor he neither. And ſo he left me and
"went to live near her, and what has become
"of him ſince, I have never heard."

"But it did not deeply diſtreſs you?"

" Yes, indeed, it did—I was very unhappy " for two days; but it was the ſeaſon of the " vintage, and we were to have a dance at " the Marquis's. La Tour would not be " there to dance with me, and I had a great " mind not to go, but I argued myſelf into " reaſon, and ſo got the better of my love. " Surely, ſaid I, the ſun will ſhine as bright, " the country look as gay, the fiddles play as " merrily as if La Tour was there, why then " ſhould I give way to a diſtreſs which only " proceeds from my own fooliſh imagination, " and give up pleaſures which are ſtill ſuch " if I can fancy them ſo. Beſides, if from " uneaſineſs I ſhould fall ſick, it will grieve " my mother and may make her ill too, and " I can get another lover, perhaps, but if I " ſhould loſe theſe, ſhall never have other " parents. So I began in earneſt to conquer " my love, and, as I was born with a happy " temper, I ſoon got the better of it. O! " there is nothing like a light heart, it makes " ſunſhine all the year through! And now I " am as happy as ever."

" O!" ſaid Agatha to herſelf, " what a " leſſon

" leſſon does this artleſs girl give to thoſe " who, with minds more cultivated, and rea- " ſon of courſe ſtronger, feebly yield to their " feelings inſtead of endeavouring like her to " conquer them. Few, indeed, are born with " this happy ſerenity of temper; and thoſe " of my own country have not the light " hearts of the French, many of whom can " cry one moment and ſing the next; but " *all* may *endeavour* to conquer, and where " the will is ſincere, the object propoſed is " generally attainable: even the *conſciouſneſs* " of an endeavour to think and act aright is " in itſelf a reward for many a ſtruggle."

In three days Agatha's new dreſs was nearly completed, and as, when ſhe was thus diſguiſed, and the purſuit after Hammond at an end, they could continue their journey without danger, it was determined that they ſhould ſet out early the next morning, and travel leiſurely every day, and at night ſleep at the different towns through which they paſſed, in ſome of which it was probable they might be fortunate enough to find a conveyance of ſome kind to take them part of the

way.—Agatha in vain endeavoured to prevail upon St. Valorie to accept ſome of her jewels as a teſtimony of her gratitude; his generous heart was amply repaid in the reflection of having ſerved thoſe who ſtood in need of his aſſiſtance.

CHAP. II.

HAMMOND, in the evening previous to their departure, accompanied Jeanot Pierre to a neighbouring town in order to purchaſe ſome proviſions to take with them. Margaret and Marianne went at the ſame time to viſit a ſick neighbour, and Agatha remained in the houſe alone. But the reſt had not been gone many minutes, when St. Valorie, who had been cultivating his little garden, entered haſtily, and with a countenance of terror conjured Agatha inſtantly to conceal herſelf in a partition in the wainſcot which he opened, and which, as the laſt inhabitants of the cottage had been ſmugglers of ſalt, had been uſed by them as a place of concealment either

either for themſelves or their contraband goods, as occaſion required. There was no time for explanation, not a moment to be loſt —for ſcarcely had Agatha entered the partition and St. Valorie cloſed it upon her, before ſhe heard the voices of ſeveral men in the houſe, demanding of St. Valorie the Lady Abbeſs that lodged with him. St. Valorie aſſured them they had been miſinformed, for that no Lady Abbeſs had ever lodged in his houſe.

"Our information, St. Valorie," anſwered one of them, "is not to be ſuſpected; we "know ſhe is concealed here, and bid you at "your peril detain her."

"I repeat it," ſaid St. Valorie, "you are "miſtaken. But if it were as you imagine, "if any unfortunate religious of either ſex had "taken ſhelter in my houſe, neither perſua- "ſions nor threats ſhould induce me to vio- "late the laws of hoſpitality."

"St. Valorie," replied one, "your pa- "triotiſm is ſuſpected. You have been ſeen "more than once converſing with ſome of "thoſe holy hypocrites; and if you would

"ſave

" ſave your own character and ſcreen your " family from danger, I adviſe you, as a " friend, if any one is here, to give them up " to juſtice quietly."

" To juſtice!" repeated St. Valorie, with emphatic ſcorn.

" No ſneers, if you pleaſe, Sir," ſaid one, " or it may be the worſe for you."

" If," rejoined St. Valorie, " my houſe " had given ſhelter to a thief—a criminal— " you might with reaſon bid me deliver them " to the juſtice they deſerved, and would " with equal reaſon deem me an accomplice " in their crimes were I to refuſe to obey " you; but when you demand of me an in- " nocent perſon, a perſon whoſe ſituation in " life was not perhaps their choice, and which, " even if it were, comprehends in itſelf no " fault, nothing but a ſtrict obſervance of a " religion once held in veneration by your- " ſelves, can you imagine I will be daſtardly " enough to give up ſuch a one to *injuſtice?* " But I repeat it,—no Lady Abbeſs lodges " with me, or has taken refuge within theſe " walls."

" St.

" St. Valorie we are not to be trifled with, " or talked out of our reaſon by your ſpeci- " ous arguments. We know from certain " information that a female Religious, a nun, " if not an Abbeſs, is now in your houſe, and " that, moreover, ſhe is poſſeſſed of a large " property, the ſavings of her convent, and " by your leave, while I keep guard over you, " my companions ſhall ſearch your houſe."

" They are welcome ſo to do," ſaid St. Valorie.

Every part of the houſe was now ſearched and every room examined, but the partition remained undiſcovered. Still, however, unſatisfied, they perſiſted in their belief, and declaring they were aſſured that ſhe was there concealed though their attempt to find her had been fruitleſs, they threatened St. Valorie with the priſon prepared for her in caſe he perſiſted in his refuſal.

" Did I not," ſaid St. Valorie, " urge you " to aſſert your rights as men? did I not ex- " ult in the liberty you had obtained?—and " did I do this but to ſubject myſelf to im- " priſonment?"

" Take

"Take that," ſaid one of them ſtriking him, "and repeat your inſolence and its re-
"ward ſhall be repeated."

"Coward!" ſaid St. Valorie, "you dared
"not inſult me, were there not numbers
"around you to protect you from my juſt
"reſentment."

"Come, come," ſaid another, "we will
"not quarrel, St. Valorie; we may all be
"friends, give but this nun to our venge-
"ance."

"Yes," rejoined another, "chuſe St.
"Valorie—a priſon and death are your por-
"tion or hers."

"My choice is made then," replied St. Valorie, with firmneſs.

"It is? Then I preſume we ſhall ſee the
"lady."

"Behold her now!" ſaid Agatha, opening the partition and coming forward.

Agatha's beauty, the elegance of her air rendered awfully majeſtic by the dignity of heroic virtue, the fortitude with which ſhe ſpoke, added to the mellifluous ſweetneſs of her voice, ſeemed to ſtrike them at once with reverence and aſtoniſhment.

"Innocent

"Innocent as I am," ſaid Agatha, "if it "muſt be ſo, I am content to die, and I "ſhall meet my fate with tranſport, if by my "death I can preſerve to his family a man "whoſe virtues render it happy, and who "has no crime even in your eyes but that of "having ſheltered an unhappy fugitive, who "for two days before he conſented in conſe-"quence of her entreaties to receive her un-"der his roof, had taſted no food but the "berries the foreſt afforded her; one depriv-"ed of parents, friends, home, every thing! "O! were ye thus deſtitute, think how ye "would bleſs the hand that was held out to "ſuccour ye, the door that opened to receive "ye! 'I was hungry, and he fed me, a "ſtranger and he took me in,'—let him not "ſuffer for that act of mercy here, for which, "in the face of the whole aſſembled world "he ſhall meet approbation and Eternal Re-"ward hereafter. For me, I am content "to ſuffer—yet how have I injured ye? "Whom have I offended? How have I "erred? Is it a crime to be deſtitute and "friendleſs?"

"Madam,"

"Madam," ſaid one of them, aſſuming courage to reply, "it is a crime to take that "money from the induſtrious, which they "have earned, to enrich lazy eccleſiaſtics; to "hoard up treaſures to ſpend in private vo- "luptuouſneſs—for we all know the lives the "Religious of either ſex lead in private, how- "ever ſanctified their outward appearance."

"I am not, as you have imagined, an Ab- "beſs," ſaid Agatha, "but I was once, "though a nun, poſſeſſed of fortune—poor "as I now am.—But I received not that "fortune from the earnings of the induſtri- "ous; it was my own, the gift of my pa- "rents—and I exulted in my riches becauſe "they enabled me to relieve the neceſſitous: "this was the voluptuous purpoſe to which "they were applied. Never did the beggar "plead in vain at my grate: but I have been "ſince a beggar, and have implored in vain "for a ſcanty pittance of that bread I once "beſtowed on others."

"This may be very fine," replied one of them, "but it is not at all to the purpoſe. "St. Valorie has taught you to preach, I find.

"Had

" Had you not led an idle life you had not
" been a beggar, as you call it; you had had
" an honeſt employment to ſupport you; and
" the daughter of a Farmer General or haugh-
" ty Noble has no right to expect mercy at
" the hands of thoſe whoſe juſt ſhare of
" wealth they have for ages withheld, and,
" while they rioted in plenty, left us to ſtarve.
" Beſides, it is known, in ſpite of your pro-
" teſtations, that you have property ſtill if
" you choſe to produce it. But however,
" yourſelf and St. Valorie, who aſſiſts you to
" conceal it, ſhall proceed with us where, if
" you do not conſent to give it up, you may
" be made to repent the refuſal."

" Why? O! why," ſaid Agatha, " in-
" volve the innocent St. Valorie in my im-
" plicated guilt? Take me, take my life, but
" ſpare him."

" No, Madam, till the fortune, till the
" riches of your convent are produced, St.
" Valorie ſuffers with you."

" Will you, O! will you," ſaid Agatha,
" if I produce the little wrecks of my pro-
" perty, will you ſpare him?"

" Not

"Not for worlds!" ſaid St. Valorie.

"Peace! I conjure you," ſaid Agatha, "will you, do you promiſe me to ſpare "him?"

"I do. He ſhall be releaſed, and never "perſecuted more."

"Enough," ſaid Agatha, putting her hand in her boſom and taking out her jewels, "bear "witneſs Heaven theſe are all I have in "the world! And now I am indeed a beg-"gar."

"God of Heaven!" exclaimed St. Valorie, raiſing his eyes and hands to Heaven, "God of Heaven preſerve and reward "her!"

The man took the jewels, and eyeing them with eager pleaſure, "you recollect, Madam," ſaid he, "that when you gave up theſe *little* "*wrecks* of your property, as you elegantly "phraſed it, you made no conditions for "yourſelf though you did for your confe-"derate."

"I did not," replied Agatha, "but my "impriſonment or death will avail you no-"thing. That I am in your power I know

"—I am

" —I am a weak and defenceleſs woman.
" But O! how poor the triumph where re-
" ſiſtance is impoſſible!"

" At that rate, Madam, we might ſpare
" every viper of ye all, for you have no wea-
" pons to defend yourſelves. However, it
" is in vain to reaſon, we had orders to ſeize
" you, and you muſt go with us."

" Not while I have an arm," ſaid St. Valorie, offering to reſcue her as they prepared to ſeize her——But his hands were inſtantly bound by two of them, while the others ſurrounded Agatha.

" On my knees then," ſaid St. Valorie,
" let me implore you to ſpare her! Take, O!
" take my life, and ſpare hers!"

" No! generous, noble St. Valorie!" ſaid Agatha, " live, live, I charge you. I have
" no family, no child, no friends to lament
" me! Guiltleſs of crime I ſhall ſink quietly
" into my grave, and bidding adieu to a world
" where I have had my portion of ſorrow,
" go where ſorrow ſhall be no more. O!
" envy me not this reſt from all my trou-
" bles."

"Nay," ſaid one of the men, unmoved by this noble ſtruggle, "theſe compli-
"ments are very unneceſſary; you are both
"welcome to go."

"No! no!" ſaid Agatha, "take *me*. *I*
"only am obnoxious to you—take me then,
"and (terrified leſt Hammond ſhould return
"and be involved in her deſtruction) delay
"not my fate. Lead the way—I am pre-
"pared to follow you."

St. Valorie as he beheld them preparing to depart with Agatha, renewed his entreaties to ſpare her, and finding them vain, in the bitterneſs of deſpair he exclaimed that ſhe ſhould not ſuffer alone.

"Nor ſhall ſhe," replied one. "I pro-
"miſed her that you ſhould be *releaſed*, and
"you ſhall, from all your troubles, and for
"ever." Then ſeizing hold of him, bound as he now was and unable to defend himſelf, he dragged him along the floor, and was taking him with Agatha to priſon, when Hammond and Jeanot Pierre returned, and almoſt at the ſame inſtant Margaret and Marianne.

Imagination

Imagination can better paint than language deſcribe the feelings of each at that moment. Hammond flew to Agatha, and, drawing his hanger, attempted to wound one of the men who held her, when another, perceiving his intention, caught his arm, and with the aſſiſtance of two others, bound him as they had already done St. Valorie.

"Inhuman wretches!" ſaid Hammond, "dread the vengeance of Heaven, though, "daſtards as ye are, ye withhold mine. My "Agatha! my Angel! do I live to ſee thee "ſuffer, yet be unable to reſcue thee!" Then forcing againſt the cords that bound him, he releaſed one hand, and ſeizing a ſtick which one of them held, felled him to the ground. He was, however, overpowered by numbers and his arms again tied down.

"Generous ſtranger!" ſaid Agatha, "you "doubtleſs miſtake me for ſome friend; but "do not, I charge you, involve yourſelf in "farther trouble on my account. Forgive "this unhappy unknown, I conjure you," ſhe continued, turning to them, her hands ſupplicatingly claſped, "forgive him. He

"miſtakes

"miſtakes me for ſome one elſe, and thence "the rage he has manifeſted; or perhaps his "mind is deranged—the miſtake indeed is a "proof that it is—ſpare him, therefore, in "pity ſpare him; and let me not involve ſo "many others in a fate I will gladly meet if "ſuffered to meet it alone. Releaſe this "ſtranger, relcaſe St. Valorie, and I will "chearfully receive the puniſhment you tell "me I deſerve, and bleſs you for this mercy "with my dying breath!"

"God of Heaven!" ſaid Hammond, frantic with grief, "do I live to hear, to "bear this!"

Agatha, endeavouring to drown his voice, again ſupplicated them to take her without delay, and to releaſe the others.

In the mean while, a ſcene not leſs affecting paſſed at the other part of the room. Margaret wept over her huſband, threw her arms around his neck, and declared that death ſhould not divide them—that ſhe would periſh with him; while the gentle Marianne kneeled by turns to her father and his perſecutors, imploring him not to irritate and offend

ſend them, and then to ſpare and forgive him. Jeanot Pierre, attempting to reſcue his father, received a blow on his head which ſtunned him, and compelled him to deſiſt.

At length the inhuman cauſers of this ſcene of complicated miſery, wearied with, though unmoved by, the tears and ſupplications of the wretched family, tore St. Valorie from the arms of his wife, and prepared to take him, Agatha, and Hammond to the priſon deſtined for their reception.

"No!" exclaimed Margaret as they forced her huſband from her, "think not that I "will outlive thee—one grave ſhall hold us. "O! we have done nothing to deſerve "this!"

"That we have not, my life," replied St. Valorie, "is my comfort. But O! live my "Margaret! live to protect and bleſs your "children! you muſt now be father and mo-"ther both. We have known many happy "days together, and for thoſe I bleſs God! "He has given, and He has a right to take "away,—Jeanot Pierre, my boy—the dar-"ling of my heart, if we ſhould never meet

" again—remember thy father—remember
" his precepts—remember that he ſuffered in
" the cauſe of virtue, and therefore exulted
" in his ſufferings: let nothing tempt you to
" diſgrace his name: act uprightly, and God
" will bleſs you here or hereafter.—Marianne!
" dry thoſe tears for thy mother's ſake—com-
" fort her, ſhe will have need of it: Be obe-
" dient and kind to her, and think that thy
" father's ſpirit hovers near you, and bleſſes
" every virtuous action you perform.—And
" now I am ready. Margaret, my love, fare
" thee well—if we meet no more—farewell
" for ever.—And now the worſt is over."

The unhappy victims were now led out of the houſe, and the ſad proceſſion commenced. Agatha, guarded by two, walked firſt; Hammond and St. Valorie followed, guarded and ſurrounded by the reſt.

The fortitude Agatha had exerted and which had been inſpired only by the hope of ſaving St. Valorie and Hammond, now that her efforts had been ineffectual, and ſhe beheld them ſharers in her fate, forſook her entirely. She looked wildly round her, and

ſeeing Hammond bound and guarded following her, anguiſh and deſpair on his countenance, ſhe gave a ſhriek and fainted in the arms of the men who held her. Hammond, whoſe eyes had been fixed on her, ſaw her ſink into their arms, and ſtrove again to break the bonds that held him, and to force his way to her; but he was forcibly detained while the wretches that witneſſed his miſery, triumphed in it, and ridiculed the *virtuous nun*, as they called her, and her *unknown paramour*. One of them, however, had the humanity to return to the cottage for ſome water for Agatha, while the reſt ſtopped till ſhe was able to proceed. Recovering to a ſenſe of exquiſite miſery, ſhe again looked around her, and beholding the ſituation of Hammond, was with difficulty kept from fainting a ſecond time.

They now proceeded through a part of the foreſt, and after walking nearly five miles, reached the town where the priſon was ſituated. It was late in the evening, and the inhabitants as they paſſed through the ſtreets, ſurveyed the proceſſion in gloomy ſilence, not daring to manifeſt either curioſity or pity.

The priſon was at the fartheſt part of the town. Its high walls, ſmall grated windows, with the dead ſilence that ſeemed to reign among its miſerable inhabitants, would have ſtruck terror to the breaſt of the moſt fearleſs. Its heavy doors were ſlowly unbarred at their approach, and immediately on their entrance, the priſoners were ſeparated, in ſpite of the entreaties of St. Valorie, the tears of Agatha, and the frantic rage and wild deſpair of Hammond.

Agatha was conveyed by her guards to a ſolitary cell, which ſhe had no ſooner entered, and heard the ruſty key grate as it was turned in the lock on the other ſide, than ſhe again fainted. Not even an enemy was now near to adminiſter a drop of water. She lay inſenſible for ſome time, and when ſhe recovered her recollection, beheld herſelf in a ſmall room or rather dungeon where the faint remains of light, which appeared through a ſmall barred window above her reach, were juſt enough to give her a view of its horrors; of the ſtone walls half green on which the drops of damp hung; and of the floor, where,

faſtened

faſtened to an iron ring, lay a chain and collar; In one corner lay a bundle of ſomething white. A kind of curioſity mingled with fear led her to approach and touch it. She ſcreamed, and ſhrunk from it with horror. It was the corpſe of an infant. To what horrors am I not reſerved! ſhe ſaid. Yet whence this terror? from that lifeleſs infant what have I to dread! Alas! a few, few days, perhaps hours, and I ſhall be as cold myſelf—an object of terror to the next weak wretch that enters this dungeon!—Poor child! it is at peace for ever—that peace ſhall ſoon be mine: then ſhall I rejoin my parents, or await with patient hope the minute that ſhall bring them to me, while I bleſs the priſon that has given me everlaſting liberty.

Endeavouring to conquer the remains of fear, ſhe again went to touch the corpſe, but twice ſhrunk back with invincible horror—but at the third attempt ſhe ſtroaked its little hand. Alas! ſhe ſaid, how cold and valueleſs the caſket when the treaſure it contained is fled! A few days paſt, this breathed, and moved—pleaſure, perhaps, ſparkled in its

little eyes, and amid the horrors of a dungeon, unconſcious of its fate, it ſmiled on the mother that ſuſtained it. And are theſe, the bewailings of the next ſtranger that is doomed to ſhare thy fate, thy only obſequies? and ſhall they be mine? Shall ſome other inheritant of miſery touch *my* clay, and lament *my* fate?—Yet what avails it? Though no holy rites are performed, no grave opened to receive me, my ſoul ſhall burſt its earthly bonds, and in the preſence of its Redeemer, remember its paſt ſorrows but as a tale that is told. Shall Hammond too—But though ſhe had calmly contemplated her own death, from the idea of his ſhe ſhrunk with horror, and for ſome minutes loſt her reaſon in the miſery the dread of his ſufferings excited.

When the ſmall remains of light had been gone for ſome hours, and the objects of terror around her were undiſcernible, the ſtillneſs of midnight was ſuddenly broken by ſcreams from a diſtant part of the priſon. The tumult every moment encreaſed, and approaching nearer to her, the cry of fire was diſtinguiſhable from every quarter. She now

heard

heard the roaring of the flames, and as ſhe diſtinguiſhed the ſound of feet not far from her, and heard ſeveral perſons at intervals paſs her cell, ſhe ſcreamed, and conjured them in mercy to open the door. But in vain —every one was buſied in providing for their own ſafety, and deaf to her prayers. The voices were now fewer. Several ſeemed to have eſcaped; and the dreadful ſound of the flames, the cracking of ſome parts of the building, and the fall of ſtones from others, appeared to render her fate inevitable. Her dungeon was now filled with ſmoak that nearly ſuffocated her, and the flames began to burſt through the crevices of the ſtone. She flew to the door, and preſſing violently againſt it with the ſtrength of deſpair and terror, burſt the rotten pannels that contained the hinges, and eſcaped from the cell.

Flying from the flames which had now communicated to almoſt every part of the priſon, ſhe arrived at an opening, and paſſing through it, eſcaped into the ſtreet. In the general conſternation and tumult ſhe was ſuffered to paſs unmoleſted, and flying ſhe knew

not whither, ſtopped at laſt, breathleſs and exhauſted at the corner of a ſtreet and leaned againſt a houſe.

A young man, ſupporting ſome one who appeared to be lame and to walk with difficulty, now paſſed her at ſome diſtance. "Who "are you, and who are you taking away "there?" ſaid a female to the young man as ſhe met him. "It is a good patriot who has "been at the fire to watch that none of the "priſoners eſcaped, and who has been wound-"ed in his virtuous endeavours," replied a voice which ſhe inſtantly knew to be Hammond's. "Brave fellow!" anſwered the woman, "I came out of my bed for the "ſame purpoſe."

When the woman was out of hearing, Agatha who ſeemed as one riſen from the grave when ſhe heard the voice of Hammond, followed and overtook him, and making herſelf immediately known to him, conjured him to moderate the joy he was preparing to give way to, and in caſe they ſhould be ſtopped by any future enquiries, to retain his preſence of mind, and to anſwer

in ſuch a manner as to ſcreen them from ſuſpicion. St. Valorie, whom it was that Hammond ſupported, and who had actually received a wound, felt little leſs delight on beholding Agatha ſafe and once more reſtored to them; but he prudently concealed his joy, and walking through the ſtreets with apparent indifference, they excited no ſuſpicion, and were aſked no further queſtions.

Once out of the town, their danger, for the preſent at leaſt, was over. Agatha now related the miracle by which ſhe had eſcaped, and Hammond and St. Valorie informed her, that though threatened to be confined ſeparate, they were, after ſome conſultation, put into one cell; and being near that part of the priſon where the fire began, their room was among the few which the perſon who kept guard had the humanity to open; but the wind riſing, and the flames ſpreading rapidly, his regard for his own ſafety prevented his going on with the charitable work; and many, doubtleſs, were left to periſh. Hammond ſaid, that remaining among the flames in the

hope of diſcovering the place of Agatha's confinement, St. Valorie had received a wound on his leg from the fall of a piece of timber, which forced him to quit the dreadful ſcene; that, ſick with the pain, and unable to walk without ſupport, he was, when Agatha ſaw him, conveying him through the ſtreets, determined as ſoon as he ſhould have left him in a place of ſafety, to return without a moment's delay to reſume his ſearch after her, and to reſcue her or periſh in the attempt.

With all the expedition poſſible they now returned by the road they came, and animated by hope, weary as Agatha already was, and ſeverely as St. Valorie ſuffered from the pain of his wound, they arrived in little more than an hour at the cottage of St. Valorie.

The wretched family were ſitting over the embers of a fire, endeavouring to adminiſter that comfort to each other which themſelves ſtood in need of, while their attempts to ſoothe each other's ſorrow ſerved but to encreaſe their own. Every face, as the faint red light gleamed upon it, beſpoke deſpair,

and

and the deep ſighs which interrupted their words ſcarcely articulate through grief, were heard ſeveral paces from the houſe. But this ſcene of diſtreſs was in a moment converted into one of joy as exquiſite, the tears of anguiſh exchanged for thoſe of a tranſport almoſt painful from its exceſs. "My huſband!" "My father! my dear father!"—"My Margaret! my love!—And my dear children!"—"And do we meet again! "And are we happy! And what bleſt "chance?——" "I have ſcarcely a moment "to unfold the ſcene of our miraculous pre-"ſervation, my life," replied St. Valorie: "now, while the conſternation and tumult "yet prevail, we muſt eſcape, before ſearch "can be made after us."

Every little treaſure that was portable was now haſtily collected—Agatha changed her habit, and as St. Valorie believed they ſhould travel with leſs hazard of ſuſpicion if they went in ſeparate parties, St. Valorie and his family took leave of Agatha and Hammond with ſenſations of the ſincereſt regret, which would have been yet more painful but for the

hope, however faint, of meeting again, St. Valorie having promiſed at the earneſt ſolicitation of Hammond to fly for refuge to England, if it were poſſible to eſcape from France; and in caſe any fatal event ſhould impede or prevent his own and Agatha's return, Hammond gave him, before they parted, a few lines which would enſure him a friend and protector in the generous Iſraeli.

As Agatha was incapable of walking far, Hammond, convinced that the report of the deſtruction of the priſon could not yet have reached the inhabitants of any of the houſes by which they paſſed, ventured to knock at the door of one to implore ſhelter for two travellers who had loſt their way. A young man came to the window, and ſeeing nothing in their appearance to excite ſuſpicion or fear, conſented to receive them for the remainder of the night, exacting a promiſe, however, that they ſhould depart early in the morning, as he knew not their patriotiſm, and might, he obſerved, get into trouble on their account. He now ſtruck a light, and coming

coming down ſtairs, let them in, and immediately conducted Agatha to his mother's chamber in which there was a bed unoccupied. Informing his mother of her gueſts, ſhe replied, not in the moſt conciliating tone, that he was a fool, and would one day repent bringing ſtrange people into the houſe—they might be Religious or Nobles for aught he knew. But, however, as they were come, they might ſtay that night, but muſt go as ſoon as it was light in the morning. Agatha, weary as ſhe was, ſcrupled to remain where ſhe had received ſo unwelcome a reception; but the young man with ſo much friendly earneſtneſs entreated her to ſtay, deſiring her in a whiſper not to regard his mother who was always croſs when ſhe was waked out of her ſleep, that ſhe at laſt conſented; and laying down in her cloaths, in ſpite of her ſtrange and unpleaſant ſituation, enjoyed ſome hours of reſt, after an evening, the fatigue, agitation, and miſery of which, exceeded all ſhe had hitherto endured. In the mean while, the youth, with the greateſt kindneſs, inſiſted on Ham-

Hammond's taking his bed while he ſat up during the reſt of the night.

CHAP. III.

EARLY in the morning Agatha was awakened by the young man, who entreated her to riſe, lamenting the neceſſity of diſturbing her ſo ſoon.—On coming down ſtairs, ſhe found a cloth ſpread and breakfaſt prepared for them by their attentive young hoſt, whom no ſolicitations could induce to receive the ſmalleſt recompenſe. At their departure, he gave them directions to a perſon in a neighbouring town of whom they might hire a conveyance to take them part of their journey. Hammond now determined to paſs for an Engliſhman, who, his wife having died in France whither ſhe had come for the benefit of her health, was returning to England accompanied by the faithful Engliſh ſervant who had attended her miſtreſs in her illneſs. This feint, which Agatha's preſent dreſs rendered plauſible, prevented ſuſpicion.

They

They found means to hire carriages, mules, or horſes during the greateſt part of their journey; and without meeting with any obſtacle of importance, except a delay of ſome days on account of a fever, with which Agatha was ſeized in conſequence of the fatigue ſhe had undergone, they paſſed through the Province of Guienne, and arrived ſafe at Bourdeaux.

A veſſel bound for Briſtol was in the harbour, waiting but a favourable wind to ſet ſail. They immediately ſecured a paſſage on board her; and embarking over night, a propitious gale aroſe early in the morning. With joy and exultation of heart they beheld the land leſſen and the ſhores move from them; and in a few hours loſt ſight of a country where miſery in almoſt every ſhape had preſented itſelf to Agatha; a country ſhe had entered with terror, but where the reality of her misfortunes had exceeded all the dark pictures her imagination had drawn. O! ſhe ſaid, let me, kind Heaven! but behold my loſt parents! may the dear ſhores of England but have given refuge to them, and my happineſs ſhall be indeed complete!—But a bleſſ-

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ing only leſs than that of meeting *them* was reſerved for her in the veſſel: the amiable St. Valorie and his family came on deck—and the joy of each on being reſtored to their friends, though prudence obliged them to moderate it, beamed in their countenance. Agatha, however, feigning to recognize them as perſons who had been kind to her late miſtreſs, embraced each in their turn; and animated by the hope of returning to thoſe yet dearer to her, ſhe ſeemed, in this moment, repaid for every paſt affliction, while her gratitude to Hammond to whom ſhe owed her preſervation, was viſible in every turn of her ſpeaking countenance.

When they had an opportunity of converſing on the ſubject, St. Valorie informed his friends, that with the aſſiſtance of the tale he invented, added to the meanneſs of their appearance which did not beſpeak them fit objects of plunder, he travelled with his little family ſafely through Guienne; while the conviction of thoſe who had taken him to priſon that he had no property to loſe, was poſſibly the reaſon why, when Agatha had eſcaped,

eſcaped, they thought it uſeleſs to diſpatch any one in purſuit of him. Agatha expreſſed much ſurprize that her reſidence with him ſhould have been ſo well known, ſince ſhe was not conſcious that ſhe had been ſeen by any but thoſe of his own family; and ſhe was equally at a loſs to imagine for what reaſon ſhe ſhould have been ſuppoſed to be an Abbeſs poſſeſſed of wealth. This was eaſily accounted for, St. Valorie replied; as no habitation was ſecure from ſpies, there might be liſteners at the inſtant in which ſhe generouſly urged his acceptance of ſome of her jewels.

They arrived without accident or delay of any kind at Briſtol, when the appearance of every one they met formed a ſtriking contraſt to that of the inhabitants of the diſtracted country they had quitted: plodding buſineſs might be traced in the faces of ſome, the ſpirit of hardy enterprize in thoſe of others; ſedate chearfulneſs was diſcernible in many, levity or vivacity in few; but in *none* that ferocious ſpirit which glories in trampling on every law human and divine ſtamped on the countenances of one half of thoſe they had left,

left, nor that fear which ſhrinks from the ſcrutiny of every beholder, dreading in every one an enemy, too legibly written in thoſe of the other. All here ſeemed to move in their own ſphere; no virtuous exertion cramped by thoſe laws which are the protection of their lives and property, the bulwarks of their liberty—and which are a ſcourge and terror to guilt alone.

"Happy, happy country! if you knew "your own happineſs," exclaimed St. Valoric, when he had heard Hammond's deſcription of the laws and government of England; "had this been the government, theſe "the laws of France, never had I deſired or "endeavoured to promote the fall of that "fabric which had well nigh buried me un-"der its ruins, as it has done thouſands of "others. Poſſibly as you obſerve, Mr. Ham-"mond, even this government, excellent as it "is, may not be perfect; there may exiſt "faults which you ſay it is the opinion of "many might be rectified: but it is not "the ſeaſon to begin to repair your own "houſe when its foundations have been re-

"cently

" cently ſhaken by the ſhock given to the
" ſurrounding earth when that of your neigh-
" bour fell: eſpecially, when the repairs at-
" tempted by him were neceſſary, and his
" houſe was barely habitable without; and
" when the imperfections of yours, if not
" imaginary, are, at leaſt, ſo trifling, that you
" may reſide in it with comfort and conve-
" nience in its preſence ſtate. Men them-
" ſelves are not perfect. In every character
" there is ſome blemiſh, which, though
" friendſhip may forgive or paſs over, and
" ſelf-love never diſcover, exiſts in proof that
" man *is* man and not an angel. Why then
" ſhould we expect that the laws framed by
" man, the government planned by him
" ſhould be without ſpeck? enough if its
" merits outweigh, infinitely outweight its
" defects. You have, I think, a proverb,
' There was a man was well, wanted to be
" better, took phyſic, and died.' Quackery
" is one of the foibles of the Engliſh; nor is
" it leſs dangerous in politics than in medi-
" cine."

From Briſtol Hammond, Agatha, St. Va-

lorie

lorie and his family proceeded immediately to Hammond's houſe, where they were met by Iſraeli, whoſe tranſports on again beholding his friend after the apprehenſions he had long been under on his account, could only be equalled by thoſe of Hammond on once more meeting his preſerver, and preſenting Agatha to him.

A meſſenger was immediately diſpatched to make every poſſible enquiry whether Sir Charles and Lady Belmont had been ſeen or heard of in England. During the abſence of the meſſenger, Agatha's agitation of ſpirits, her alternate hopes and fears were almoſt too exceſſive to be endured. Hammond endeavoured by every effort in his power to calm her ſpirits, and to arm her againſt the worſt ſhould it arrive, and ſhould the intelligence received of them be fatal; the gentle Marianne wept with her, and St. Valorie raiſed his eyes to Heaven in ſilent devotion.

After an abſence of ſeveral hours the meſſenger returned, but returned without bringing any intelligence but what Hammond was before acquainted with: the houſe formerly inhabited

inhabited by Sir Charles and Lady Belmont and the eſtate around it had been ſold by their orders ſoon after their departure, and the money tranſmitted to them in France: the agent employed to tranſact the affair was ſince dead, nor could he learn that from that period any thing had been known or heard of them.

Hammond, by gentle degrees, broke the report to Agatha, endeavouring at the ſame time to encourage the hope that though they were not yet in England they might be ſafe; their return might be only delayed; and though the flattering idea ſhe had indulged was diſappointed for the preſent, it might yet be realized. In the mean time, for his ſake, for her own, for theirs even, he conjured her not to give way to deſpondeney; but, remembering her own next to miraculous preſervation, to look forward with confidence to theirs.—Agatha's diſtreſs gave way by degrees to the hope Hammond ſtrove to encourage: and though her dejection was but too viſible, it was leſs extreme than he had apprehended. But where the leaſt room for hope remains, the heart, when the firſt ſenſa-

tions

tions of diſappointment are over, again clings to it with eagerneſs, though, but an hour before, convinced by fatal experience of its fallacy.

Happy as Agatha was in Hammond's ſociety, ſhe judged it improper to make his houſe her place of reſidence, as well on account of the idea of impropriety the world might affix to it, as on his own, ſince his attachment to her in every light but that of friend ſhe anxiouſly wiſhed to deſtroy, and her continuance with him in a ſpot where that attachment began, but too evidently preſerved and encreaſed it. Yet whither to go ſhe knew not—ſhe had, alas! no other home, no fortune to procure her one. Her jewels, her laſt dependence were gone. She would not have bluſhed to earn a ſubſiſtence by her own induſtry; but this, ſhe was convinced, Hammond would never conſent to while he had a fortune to ſupport her. Her generous heart, indeed, conſcious of the pleaſure of beſtowing felt no pain in receiving; and ſhe was above that narrow pride which deteſts the ſenſe of obligation even to thoſe who are

deareſt

deareſt to us. From Hammond, infinitely as ſhe was indebted to him already, ſhe could without pain receive pecuniary aſſiſtance; yet to leave him now, and thus to make that aſſiſtance immediately neceſſary, ſeemed indelicate. At laſt, as the leaſt objectionable plan, ſhe came to a determination, to reſide with St. Valorie, whom Hammond purpoſed to place in a farm on his eſtate, as ſoon as he ſhould be ſettled, and till that time to entreat Jemima to permit her to board in her family, exacting a promiſe from Hammond to conſider her as his debtor for the ſums ſhe ſhould want till the arrival of her parents, an event the probability of which ſhe could not bear to doubt. She had written to Mrs. Herbert immediately on her landing, but ſhe was out at the time the letter came; and now, anxious to ſee and conſult with her, ſhe would have ſent to her or written again, but on enquiry found ſhe was not returned.

Several days had now paſſed, and every one but more and more convinced Agatha that her continuance with Hammond would be fatal to his peace. She therefore ſeized an opportunity one morning of introducing the ſubject,

ſubject, and confeſſed her intention of leaving him; alledging, principally, the light in which the world might regard her reſidence with him. "To act merely for the world, Hammond," continued Agatha, "to act merely "with a view to gain its approbation, is certainly condemnable; we ought to have "higher and better incentives to propriety "of conduct than the praiſe or opinion of "the generality. But on the other hand, to "contemn its cenſures is ſometimes one ſtep "towards deſerving them. There are perſons, who, ſatisfied with the conviction of "the purity of their own actions, dare and "incur the cenſures of the world. Accident or inclination afterwards draw them "from the path they had deſigned to tread—"the world has cenſured—it can do no more "—they have no character to loſe, and thus "are freed from *one* of the terrors of guilt. "Beſides, our example may give a licenſe to "others whoſe motives are leſs pure, and "who learn from us to deſpiſe that world, "whoſe opinion had otherwiſe, it is probable, "kept them in awe."

Hammond heard Agatha's determination with

with pain though without ſurprize, and acquieſced with ſilent yet evident dejection.

"Think not, my beſt friend," ſaid Agatha, obſerving with extreme pain the melancholy depicted on his countenance, "O! think not "that there is a wiſh of this heart ſuperior to "that of promoting your happineſs; and it "is that, ultimately that, which is one, if not "a principal inducement to me to propoſe a "plan, which, by ſeparating us ſometimes, "may render other ſubjects the employment "of your thoughts, and diveſt the heart of "my friend of every lurking remains of that "attachment which has diſturbed its tran-"quility."

"My Agatha," replied Hammond, "I "know not how to oppoſe your wiſhes, even "when they tend, as now, to make me mi-"ſerable. But hope nothing from abſence. "A love which reaſon confirms and en-"creaſes, which depends not upon perſonal "attractions, and would continue were my "Agatha diveſted of every charm which, till "I knew the ſuperior beauties of her mind, "claimed my admiration——a love like this

" it is in vain to ſeek by abſence to cure; it
" muſt exiſt while that reaſon maintains her
" ſeat. In this ſpot that love began. Here
" firſt I indulged hopes, never, alas! to be
" realized, yet never to be forgotten—I had
" almoſt ſaid, relinquiſhed. On this very
" table I leaned, when my Agatha with a
" ſmile of plaintive tenderneſs at this mo-
" ment preſent to my imagination, took out
" her pocket-book, and pointing to one of
" the leaves, bid me remark it. The me-
" lancholy day that brought me here, wit-
" neſs of a ſpectacle how dreadful! you had
" covered with black except one ſmall ſpace.
" When I aſked an explanation, 'That ſpace,
" Mr. Hammond,' you replied, 'is left to
" ſignify your coming—one *white event* in a
" day how dark beſide!'—My Agatha! judge
" of my feelings at that moment. Think
" you not I longed to preſs the dear emblem
" of that *white event* to my lips—my heart!
" —Not daring to indulge my feelings, I
" aroſe to leave you, while with angel-
" ſweetneſs you followed, conjuring me not
" to be pained by your revival of a dreadful

" remem-

" remembrance, declaring you meant but to
" expreſs your own friendſhip for me.—O my
" Agatha!—yet you are here, and I am
" wretched!—"

Agatha was for ſome minutes too much affected to reply. At length, "Hammond," ſhe ſaid, with aſſuming firmneſs, " are we not culpa-
" ble when, becauſe it is the will of Heaven
" to deny *ſome* of the wiſhes of our hearts, we
" believe we owe no gratitude for the bleſſings
" which *are* given us? in that agonizing mo-
" ment that ſeparated us in the priſon, would
" you not have given worlds to be aſſured
" you ſhould be one day as happy as you are
" at this hour? yet now that happineſs is
" deſpiſed. All the comforts of your ſitua-
" tion are diſregarded, becauſe it is not *all*
" you wiſh it. Recollect yourſelf, my deareſt
" friend; recollect the precepts of your
" excellent ſiſter, and 'in thy pilgrimage
" through a world of woe, ſeek not to height-
" en thine affliction.'—"

Agatha now changed the ſubject, and Iſraeli with St. Valorie and his family entering the room, ſhe endeavoured with forced viva-

vacity to introduce a general converſation, in hopes of breaking the chain of melancholy ideas in Hammond's mind, when a poſt chaiſe ſtopped at the door, and in a moment Mrs. Herbert flew into Agatha's arms.

When the firſt emotions of pleaſure had ſubſided, Mrs. Herbert, impatient to learn by what fortunate event Agatha had eſcaped, entreated her to inform her of every thing that had befallen her.—Agatha, acknowledging with tears of gratitude that ſhe was indebted to Hammond for her preſervation, related as ſuccinctly as poſſible whatever had paſſed ſince the period when her diſtreſſes and precarious ſituation forced her to diſcontinue a correſpondence that had been one of her greateſt pleaſures. When ſhe came to that part of her narrative which deſcribed her obligation to St. Valorie, ſhe preſented him and his amiable family to Mrs. Herbert, who, looking firſt on them, and then on Agatha, Hammond, and Iſraeli, contemplated with tears of admiration ſo many votaries of virtue—ſo many in whom ſelf-preſervation had been deſpiſed in their endeavours to reſcue others.

When

When Agatha informed Mrs. Herbert that ſhe had thoughts of reſiding with Mrs. Arnold, if it were convenient, till St. Valoric was fixed in the farm in which Hammond was preparing to place him, Mrs. Herbert inſiſted on her accompanying her home. Mr. Ormiſtace, ſhe ſaid, was out, but ſhe could be anſwerable for his pleaſure on finding Agatha an inmate of his houſe at his return. "Indeed," continued Mrs. Herbert, "ſuch an "event will be the ſureſt means of making "my peace with him; for on my diſbelieving the tale of a ballad ſinger whom he "took into the houſe, and who has ſince his "departure eloped with the greateſt part of "the furniture of her apartment, he left me "in anger, threatening never to ſpeak to me "again. You will therefore be doubly welcome juſt at this time as a mediatrix between us. Yet with this ſingle foible my "uncle has a heart that does honour to human nature. Indeed his very faults are the "offſpring of benevolence; and I were undeſerving the thouſand acts of kindneſs I "have received from him did I not take a "pride in acknowledging it."

Agatha had half conſented to Mrs. Herbert's requeſt, when looking at Hammond and obſerving the diſtreſs impreſſed on his countenance, and reading a look which ſeemed to ſay it was at once cruel and ungrateful to leave him thus haſtily, ſhe retracted her conſent, entreating Mrs. Herbert to excuſe her for a few days only; and naming a day in the next week, promiſed faithfully that ſhe would then come to her.—Hammond, grateful for this reſpite, though but of a few days, now as plainly expreſſed by his countenance the joy he felt; while Mrs. Herbert, looking at them both with arch penetration, expreſſed by a ſmile no leſs intelligible that ſhe perfectly comprehended the reaſon of the delay.

Taking Agatha aſide at her departure, "my ſweet friend," ſaid Mrs. Herbert, "is "not a nun in her heart *now*."

"Indeed," replied Agatha, colouring at the inſinuation, "indeed I am."

"In *deed* you are, my dear, but not in "thought, in wiſh—O! my ſweet Agatha, "when nature and love deſigned you and

"Hammond

" Hammond for each other, what a thou-
" ſand pities was it, that the blind old lady
" Fortune in one of her moody humours
" ſhould contrive to ſeparate you. But, how-
" ever, ſhe has made all the ſeparation in her
" power by bringing you together again; and
" I hope it will be ſo contrived that I ſhall yet
" ſee you as happy as you deſerve to be."

" In the ſenſe you allude to, never—" replied Agatha. " But if I live to ſee Ham-
" mond ſubdue his fatal attachment, and feel
" himſelf happy, I ſhall be ſo. If I have the
" leaſt knowledge of my own heart, I only
" wiſh my vows revocable for *his* ſake—with
" regard to myſelf, I am yet, believe me I am,
" a *nun* in my *heart*."

Mrs. Herbert with a look which ſeemed to ſay ſhe muſt not in politeneſs contradict what however ſhe could not be made to credit, now took leave of Agatha for the preſent, promiſing to ſend her carriage for her on the day appointed.

CHAP. IV.

THE interval between Mrs. Herbert's viſit and the day fixed for the departure of Agatha was paſſed in the moſt earneſt endeavours on the part of Agatha, ſeconded by the arguments of St. Valorie, to reconcile Hammond to her abſence, and on his, in reiterated promiſes to bear his fate with patience, every one of which was no ſooner made than broken.

At length the dreaded day came, and the chaiſe with Mrs. Herbert in it arrived. With a pain ſhe could neither conquer nor conceal Agatha prepared to take leave of Hammond, —ſhe would have expreſſed her gratitude to him, but her voice failed her. At laſt, turning to St. Valorie and Iſraeli, "Heaven bleſs "you both!" ſhe ſaid. "Strive to amuſe "our dear and common friend in the abſence "of one of the happy group." Then giving her hand to Hammond, "I ſhall ſee you "again—perhaps, in a few days, my deareſt "friend."

"Surely,"

"Surely," ſaid Mrs. Herbert. "Whenever Mr. Hammond will favour us with "his company, I ſhall conſider it a pleaſure; "and my uncle's partiality to him is too well "known to render a particular invitation "neceſſary."

With all the courage ſhe could aſſume, Agatha now bad Hammond farewell, and attended Mrs. Herbert. Hammond led her to the carriage, and beheld it take her from the houſe which her preſence had endeared to him with ſevere though ſilent ſorrow.

The diſtance was not great, and they arrived in little more than an hour at the houſe of Mr. Ormiſtace. When the chaiſe ſtopped, ſome of the ſervants gathered around it at a diſtance, and others flocked to the windows to ſee the prodigy—a Nun!—"She is a "pretty creature," one of the men whiſpered to another; "what a bleſſed thing it is ſhe "has got out of the nunnery! She may well "bleſs the revolution, though the poor ſouls "that now lie dead for it would tell you ano-"ther ſtory." "Thank fate," whiſpered a a female ſervant, "I am not one of the Pa-

" piſhes; but if I was they ſhould never have " made a nun of me, *I can* tell 'em. Only " ſee how diſmal ſhe looks, ſhe has not over- " got it yet, poor creature!"

Agatha had not been arrived more than an hour when Mr. Ormiſtace returned. In the earneſtneſs with which he flew to Mrs. Herbert he did not even ſee Agatha. " My deareſt " Emma," he exclaimed, kiſſing her affectionately, " I have been wrong, very wrong. " Can you forgive me?—But indeed, my " dear Emma, you are ſometimes too hard as " I was on this occaſion too eaſy of belief."

" My dear Sir," replied Mrs. Herbert, " I " always regard your heart with veneration, " even at the inſtant in which I ſuffer from " its preference of others who do not deſerve " your kindneſs. But we neither of us love " recrimination. All is paſt and forgotten. " And now, as Mrs. Malaprop ſays, all our " retroſpections ſhall be to the future. But " ſee," continued Mrs. Herbert, " one for " whoſe preſence I expect as many thanks as " ſhe has merits, or you will have hours of " pleaſure in her company."

Miſs

" Miſs Belmont!" exclaimed Mr. Ormiſtace in tranſport, " this unexpected pleaſure " is great indeed! Let me welcome to a " houſe which I ſhould be but too proud if " ſhe would call a home, one I ſhall delight " to conſider as ſiſter to my Emma, and ſharer " with her in every comfort I have to beſtow. " But you ſee what an impetuous fellow you " have to deal with, and muſt learn of Emma " generouſly to forgive my faults. And yet " ſhe cannot condemn me for them half ſo " much at the time, as I do myſelf after- " wards."

Mr. Ormiſtace with unbounded kindneſs endeavoured to render every hour more agreeable to Agatha than the laſt, and ſeemed to have no ſtudy but to make her forget her troubles, and feel herſelf at home. Ringing the bell for one of the female ſervants, he bid her attend particularly on Miſs Belmont, and conſider her as her miſtreſs during her reſidence with him and Mrs. Herbert, which he hoped would be very *very* long.

Agatha now enquired of Mrs. Herbert concerning the family of Sir John Milſon, in which ſhe had been informed that ſeveral

changes had taken place, and learned from her the following particulars.—Sir John Milſon had been dead ſeveral months, and his eldeſt ſon, now Sir Valentine Milſon, was maſter of Milſon Hall. The widow with her eldeſt daughter had taken a ſmall houſe in the neighbourhood which was to be fitted up according to the taſte of both; but they were at preſent at Scarborough for the benefit of Miſs Milſon's health. Mr. William Milſon, after pining ſome years after Agatha, the object of his ſecond tender attachment and the ſubject of his muſe, convinced, at laſt, that his paſſion was utterly hopeleſs, had ſeriouſly reſolved to conquer it: but being incapable of living without an attachment, had a third time ſurrendered his heart, to a daughter of Mr. Crawford, an amiable and intereſting young woman, to whom, with her father's full conſent, he had lately been married. Mrs. Milſon, to whom his attachment had been rather that of friendſhip and eſteem than love, poſſeſſed juſt enough ſenſibility to make her ſuſceptible of every virtuous impreſſion and alive to every feeling of humanity,

ty, without having enough to create imaginary troubles, or to encreaſe by romantic extravagance the real evils of life. As their attachment was that of reaſon, reaſon ſerved but to encreaſe it, and they were to appearance perfectly happy in each other. Miſs Caſſandra, Sir John Milſon's youngeſt daughter, had been married almoſt three years to a Mr. Besford, a worthy young merchant, who lived chiefly in London, but had taken a country houſe near Milſon-Hall for the ſummer, where his wife and children yet were. Mrs. Besford, was the ſame goodnatured, and merely goodnatured character ſhe had ever been, without any alteration in her appearance except being grown immoderately fat.

Late in the evening a note arrived from Mrs. Besford, requeſting to ſee Agatha as ſoon as poſſible, as ſhe had ſomething of importance to ſay to her. She added that ſhe would have come to her herſelf immediately on being informed of her arrival at Mrs. Herbert's, but was forbidden, owing to an indiſpoſition ſhe had lately had, to quit the houſe.

Agatha,

Agatha, whoſe beating heart inſtantly preſaged ſome tidings reſpecting her parents, was anxious to obey the ſummons immediately, till aſſured by Mrs. Herbert, that, in all probability, what Mrs. Besford wiſhed to ſay was not of the importance ſhe repreſented it, and was perhaps nothing more than congratulations on her arrival in England, or very likely ſome frivolous queſtions ſhe might wiſh to aſk her relative to convents.

In the morning, however, the chaiſe was ordered, and Mrs. Herbert attended Agatha to Mrs. Besford's.—They found her amuſing herſelf with her two children, one of whom was tearing out the leaves of a folio for *his* diverſion. She aroſe on Agatha's entrance, and ſhaking her hand with hearty good nature, "My dear *dear* Miſs Belmont," ſhe ſaid, "you can't imagine how glad I am to "ſee you come ſafe back again. I was ſo "ſorry when I heard you was to be a nun, "and was taken off to France all in that "hurry, that I could have cried. And I "wanted ſo ſadly to hear how you got "away that I could not reſt till I had "ſeen you."——

Agatha

Agatha thanked her for her friendly ſolicitude, and deſcribed the manner in which ſhe was compelled to quit the convent.

" But my dear creature," ſaid Mrs. Besford, " ſurely you did not want much bid-
" ding to make you leave the place. My
" goodneſs! they need but have opened
" the doors, and if I had been you I ſhould
" not have wanted aſking to go. I am ſure
" I have always been very ſorry for you, and
" when my poor father uſed to aſk me in his
" joking way how *I* ſhould like to be a nun,
" I always ſaid that I had *almoſt* as lief be
" one myſelf as that you ſhould, for I never
" liked any body half ſo well as I did you.
" Well, and now do tell me all about it.
" There are two kinds of people I have al-
" ways wanted to talk to, and thoſe are, nuns
" and negroes. I always wanted to hear if
" nuns are really ſo comfortable ſometimes
" as ſome people ſay they are, and whether
" negroes are really ſo cruelly treated as Mr.
" Sharp and Mr. Wilberforce ſay they are.
" I am ſure if I thought ſo, I would never
" eat ſugar again; indeed I did leave it off
" once, but ſome how or other I forgot my

" reſolution

" reſolution and drank it again. Well, and " how did you paſs your time? How ſoon " did you dine? What did you generally talk " about? And is it indeed true that you " uſed to get up in the night to ſay your " prayers?"

When Agatha had ſatisfied her curioſity as well as ſhe was able in theſe ſeveral particulars, " O! dear goodneſs gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Besford, " well, I would not " be a nun—no not for the world—I had ra- " ther have a child every week. But how " glad my ſiſter will be to ſee you! It will " put her in mind of all the Kings and Queens " that ever reigned in England. Not that I " mean to laugh at Sophy for her learning— " I am ſure I wiſh I was half as clever my- " ſelf. But ſome how or other I never could " be. I uſed to determine I would read, and " ſo I began a book of hiſtory ſhe gave me, " and read almoſt as far as King William the " Conqueror; but then as I never could tell " whereabouts I was without I put a paper " in my place, I uſed always to read the " ſame over again, and ſo never got any for- " warder. And when I did mark my place,

" I had

" I had always forgot what went before, and " ſo was obliged to begin from the beginning " every time I went to it. And now I am " married and have children, and have ſome- " thing elſe to do."

After a little more converſation equally trifling, Agatha and Mrs. Herbert took leave of Mrs. Besford, and went to call on Jemima.

Old Mrs. Simmonds had been dead ſome years, and Jemima was mother of three children, who already promiſed by their ſweet diſpoſitions and attentive obedience to her wiſhes to pay her back with intereſt her own excellent behaviour to her aged parent.—Jemima, or, as ſhe was now always called, Mrs. Arnold, met them at the door of her little dwelling with a face that expreſſed the ſweet contentment of a mind at peace with itſelf, yet tinctured with that degree of care, which, without ſeeming to have invaded her comforts, beſpoke her the mother of a family; betraying the fond ſolicitude of maternal tenderneſs, and ſhewing her, though happy, not ſupinely ſo. Harry was then buſied in his farm, and Jemima had been laying the cloth,

cloth, and preparing dinner againſt his return. She met her former generous benefactreſs with tears of pleaſure, and reſpectfully led her and Mrs. Herbert into her little parlour, the furniture of which indicated that happy ſituation in life which is far above indigence, but in which luxury has created no artificial wants. The floor white as ſnow was covered by a ſmall ſquare mat near the fire-place, the ſtove in which, had received its utmoſt degree of poliſh from the hand of its induſtrious miſtreſs, and was now filled with the white pods of emblematic honeſty, mixed with Michaelmas daiſies. A curtain of light flowered linen was feſtooned over the window, in which ſtood a pot of myrtle and another of mignionets. On the chimney-piece were two buſts in plaiſter of Paris of Shakeſpear and Milton, which at once ſerved as ornaments for the room, and playthings for the children; and a coat of arms that had been given to Harry by his Godfather, was framed and hung up over them. The door of a cupboard in one corner of the room was open, and diſplayed their ſmall ſtock of glaſs and china arranged in complete order.

Mrs.

Mrs. Arnold now ſet her bright oak table before them, and bringing a plain cake, and a bottle of cowſlip wine, entreated them to accept of the poor entertainment ſhe could give them. "And yet," continued Jemima, "to them who, like me, have known no bet-
"ter fare, this is excellent good. Our wine,
"which is ſeldom brought out but on great
"occaſions, when it does come always makes
"us cheary and gay. We drink a health to
"each other and our little ones, and are as
"happy!—And when we look upon our chil-
"dren, and ſee in their faces the goodneſs
"that is in their hearts, and think that when
"we are old and paſt labour they will love
"to work and maintain us; and when we
"think how we ſhall ſtill love one ano-
"ther when time ſhall take from us all
"that beauty that is but a ſhadow, and ſhall
"even then find comfort in nurſing and
"attending each other; and that we ſhall
"ſtill feel young and gay when we ſee our
"children ſo around us—O! when we think
"of this, we look up to Heaven, and believe
"and ſay there is no lot like ours. Surely
"there is nothing like true love! it lightens

"every

" every burden, makes greater every happi-
" neſs, and makes old age ſeem as nothing.
" Then my little Betty and Jemima are al-
" ready helps to me. Dear mother, little
" Mimy often ſays if ſhe ſees me fatigued,
" do not work ſo hard—I wiſh I was old
" enough to do every thing for you. And
" Harry is a ſweet ſprightly lad, the image
" of his father."

Mrs. Arnold now went out, and returning in a few minutes with her children, preſented them to Agatha, who, too deeply affected with this ſcene of domeſtic happineſs, went to the window to conceal the tears that would not be ſuppreſſed. Mrs. Herbert went to her, and beckoning to Mrs. Arnold to take the children away, " My ſweet——ſweet
" friend!" ſhe ſaid, preſſing her to her heart,
" if I had had the leaſt idea you would have
" felt thus, I would have gone an hundred
" miles elſewhere rather than have brought
" you hither."

" Be not diſtreſt for me," replied Agatha;
" it was a temporary emotion, and will ſoon
" be over. But O! Mrs. Herbert, when I
" reflected that a life of happineſs equal if

" not

" not ſuperior to this *might* have been mine!
" —Yet how ſelfiſh the thought! May you
" —may *all* I love be happy, and I ſhall, I
" will be ſo."

Mrs. Arnold now returning, filled another glaſs of wine for Agatha, and with the tendereſt ſolicitude entreated her to take it, while the tears ſtood in her eyes on beholding thoſe of Agatha, though unconſcious of what had given riſe to her uneaſineſs. Agatha now making an effort to ſubdue her feelings, entreated once more to ſee the children, and giving a kiſs to each, took leave of Jemima in the moſt affectionate manner, and with Mrs. Herbert quitted a ſcene that had left impreſſions on her mind which it required all her courage and ſelf-command to *efface*.

CHAP. V.

WHEN Agatha returned, ſhe was informed that a young man, who ſaid his name was Smith, had called to ſpeak to her on particular buſineſs, but finding her out,

out, had promiſed to call again in the evening. Agatha, whoſe heart always foreboded ſome tidings of her parents, and who could aſſign no other probable reaſon for a ſtranger deſiring to ſpeak to her, waited with impatience the time of his arrival.

At about ſix o'clock Mr. Smith came; and immediately on his entrance Mr. Ormiſtace and Mrs. Herbert withdrew.

"You have heard, I hope, Sir," ſaid Agatha tremblingly, "and yet I almoſt fear to "enquire—you have heard ſome intelligence "of my parents?"

"Indeed, I have not, Madam," replied Mr. Smith, "which is the cauſe of my now "troubling you. You are, I underſtand, the "daughter and only child of Sir Charles "Belmont?"

"I am, Sir."

"Sir Charles Belmont, Madam, was an "excellent character, and I, for one, have "great reaſon to bear teſtimony to his merit. "When I was a very young man, juſt beginning buſineſs for myſelf, Sir Charles very "generouſly lent me Two Thouſand Five

"Hundred

" Hundred Pounds, requiring only the mo-
" derate intereſt of three per Cent. You
" probably may have heard him mention the
" circumſtance, Ma'am?

" Never in my life, Sir."

" Poſſibly not, Madam. You was young,
" I think, at the time he left England, and
" might not be made acquainted with all his
" pecuniary affairs. Now, Madam, as I have
" lately married a wife with a handſome fortune,
" and have no further occaſion for the mo-
" ney, I ſhould be glad to be clear of the
" world, as I may term it, and ſhould wiſh,
" therefore, to pay back into the hands of
" the owner, or, in default of that, (he not
" being in England, nor to be heard of at
" preſent,) into thoſe of his daughter, the
" ſum I have ſpecified; requiring only a
" proper diſcharge from her on the receipt
" of it."

Agatha aſſured him that ſhe was entirely ignorant of pecuniary tranſactions, and entreated his permiſſion to conſult Mr. Ormiſtace on the ſubject, at the ſame time acknowledging her obligations to Mr. Smith.

" The

"The obligations, Madam, are nothing "on *your* ſide," replied Mr. Smith, "though "great on mine; and as I am diſcharging "my other debts, I ſhall think myſelf hap-"py in being freed from this."

"But is it not poſſible, Sir," ſaid Agatha, "that my father, intending merely to ſerve "you, neither expected nor deſired the ſum "to be returned? His never mentioning the "affair ſeems indeed to render this ſuppoſi-"tion probable."

"By no means, Madam," anſwered Mr. Smith, "I paid him the Intereſt duly, and he "had my bond for the money."

"Then till that bond is deſtroyed you can "not ſecurely pay it, I ſhould apprehend," returned Agatha.

"Your diſcharge (Mr. Ormiſtace witneſſ-"ing the payment) will be a ſufficient ſa-"tisfaction to me, Madam," replied Mr. Smith.

Agatha now left him to conſult Mr. Ormiſtace, who adviſed her by all means to receive the money, ſince Mr. Smith was deſirous of paying it, promiſing to take the charge of it,

and to place it for her in the funds. Agatha, therefore, according to his directions, received the ſum, and wrote the diſcharge in the words dictated to her. And thus, by an event entirely unforeſeen, ſhe was no longer in a ſtate of dependence; ſhe had a fortune which, though ſmall compared to what ſhe formerly poſſeſſed, was conſiderable enough to enable her to poſſeſs an habitation of her own; and ſhe immediately determined to hire and furniſh a ſmall houſe near Mrs. Herbert for her reſidence till the ſtill-hoped-for period of her parents arrival.

As ſoon as Mr. Smith was gone, Agatha wrote to Hammond to inform him of the circumſtance. After relating every thing that had paſſed on the ſubject, ſhe concluded her letter, "To my friend—my preſerver—I "ſhall not therefore be neceſſitated to apply "for the aſſiſtance I could without pain have "received from his generous hand; even "though aſſured I ſhould never have been "able to repay him. And yet I *do* rejoice "in my little independence, ſince I ſhall not "now be compelled to rob the indigent, nor to

" take from my friend a portion of that for-
" tune, the beneficent employment of which
" procures him the prayers and bleſſings of
" how many!"

Early in the following morning Hammond was announced; and the pleaſure he felt on again ſeeing Agatha after even this ſhort ſeparation, added to the friendly welcome he always received from Mr. Ormiſtace, induced him frequently to repeat his viſits, however dangerous the indulgence.—Agatha ſaw with extreme pain the dejection with which he always took leave of her, were the expected abſence ever ſo ſhort; yet ſhe ſtill indulged the hope, that by never giving him an opportunity of converſing with her alone, or touching on the fatal ſubject, his unfortunate attachment would by degrees be leſſened, and at length entirely deſtroyed, leaving only that friendſhip behind which might be cheriſhed without pain or danger to either of them.

As Mrs. Herbert was not, any more than Mr. Ormiſtace, deſirous of an extenſive acquaintance, except the family of the Crawfords and ſome other friends equally eſtimable,

ble, they had few viſitors. On a day appointed, however, Sir Valentine and Lady Milſon with Mr. and Mrs. Craggs who were on a viſit to them, and ſeveral other perſons in the neighbourhood were to dine with them. Agatha would have been excuſed attending them, believing it right to mix as little as poſſible with the world; but in compliance with the earneſt ſolicitations of Mrs. Herbert, who believed the caprices of Mr. Craggs might be a ſource of amuſement to her friend, ſhe conſented to make one of the party.

Mr. Craggs had lately learned, either from his own cogitations or from the whim of ſome obſolete author, that the Sun, as it is the centre of our ſyſtem, is likewiſe the centre of all perfection—our Heaven in ſhort, whither we all tend, and ſhall ultimately be aſſembled. "Do not the Perſians," he would obſerve, "who no doubt draw their tradition "from ſome ſacred ſource, make it the ob-"ject of their worſhip? Every thing we ſee," he would further affirm, "whether in the ani-"mal or vegetable world, appears firſt in an "imperfect ſtate, and advances by degrees to

" maturity and perfection. It is, therefore,
" ſelf-evident that mankind are born in that
" planet moſt diſtant from the Sun in our
" ſyſtem originally, from whence, after their
" migration to another, or, as it is vulgarly
" called, death, they proceed into the next;
" and ſo on, life after life, growing progreſ-
" ſively more perfect in each, till they reach
" their Sun or Heaven. Now, he would ſay,
" it is our duty to continue as long as poſſible
" in each of the Planets in which we are
" placed, for which reaſon I have taken all
" poſſible care to preſerve my health in this.
" But that is not enough. I muſt begin to
" make ſome preparation for the next. Ve-
" nus, into which I ſhall ſhortly go, will ap-
" pear very hot on my firſt entrance, and no
" doubt during my infancy I ſhall be liable
" to feveriſh complaints; to prevent which, I
" hold it right to accuſtom myſelf to endure
" all the heat I can ſupport in this. For
" though the ſoul is not material, it has a
" material covering as we may term it, and
" is ſenſible of pain from exterior and mate-
" rial circumſtances. Does not a wound on

" the brain affect the ſoul or mind, call it
" which you will, and do not corporeal pains
" cauſe it to quit the body it inhabited, oc-
" caſioning what is ordinarily called death?
" We ought, therefore, to make its habita-
" tion as comfortable to it as poſſible that it
" may not be induced to leave it. I wiſh
" therefore gradually to accuſtom it to the
" heats of the next Planet." Mr. Craggs would frequently aſſert, that he had ſome recollection of his reſidence in Mars, a fainter yet of what had paſſed in Jupiter; of Saturn he confeſſed he remembered very little, and of the Georgium Sidus nothing at all. He alledged in favour of his ſyſtem, the phraſe uſed by the North American Indians, who ſay, that a perſon has *changed his climate*, when they would ſignify that he is dead: and thence he adduced the truth of his poſition: ſince unenlightened nations by traditionary evidence have frequently the beſt and leaſt perverted ideas of paſt events.

In compliance with his new ſyſtem, Mr. Craggs was habited very warm, in order to induce an artificial heat. He wore, on his

entrance, a complete dreſs of flannel lined with fur, though the weather was mild and warm. His hands were covered by a large muff, and his little emaciated face was juſt diſcernible through the aperture of his green bayes cap. At dinner he deſired the ſervants to make liquor ſomewhat more than blood heat, about 99 degrees as nearly as they could gueſs.

" I am thinking," ſaid Sir Valentine Milſon, " how exceſſively fooliſh you are Mr " Craggs."

" Sir," ſaid Mr. Craggs, raiſing his head, and diſcovering his face turned paler by anger, and rendered more ghaſtly by the hue given to it by the green bayes cap which more than half covered it.

" Why I mean," continued Sir Valentine, " that when you go to that monſtrous hot " place, it's fifty to one but the water's cold. " For I heard my Dame teaching the chil- " dren the other day, that there was a burning " mountain and a hot ſpring in Iceland. " Now, you know, if that's the caſe, very " likely there's cold ſprings in the place you " talk of going to."

" There

"There is ſome ſemblance of reaſon in "what you obſerve," replied Mr. Craggs, relaxing from his ſeverity, and eyeing Sir Valentine with more complacency than uſual; "there probably may be cold ſprings even in "Mercury; but then they will be as rare, in "all probability, as hot ones are in our Pla-"net; and I may not reſide near one. I "thank you, however, for the hint."

"You are heartily welcome," returned Sir Valentine; "and I think if ever there was a "good man you are one."

Mr. Craggs bowed.

"Becauſe," continued Sir Valentine, "you "do what very few other people do, think "nothing of this world to prepare for the "next; though, to be ſure, there's few but "you that would like the thoughts of going "into a very *hot one.* You underſtand "me?"

"No, Sir," replied Mr. Craggs, diſappointed at the concluſion of the ſpeech. Then returning to his meditations, he ſeemed to forget that any one was preſent.

When the company were gone, Agatha la-

mented to Mrs. Herbert the perverſion of faculties which made Mr. Craggs a ſlave to imaginary apprehenſions, and deſtroyed every comfort of his life.

"Call it rather a derangement of intel-
"lect," replied Mrs. Herbert. "But be
"that as it may, an exceſſive attention to
"preſerve a life valuable to no one but him-
"ſelf, was the primary cauſe of it. We
"ſhould be very careful to what propenſities
"we give way in youth, ſince they generally
"grow upon us as we advance in life; and
"there are few foibles for which ſelf-love
"cannot find an excuſe, as there is ſeldom
"an hypotheſis, however abſurd, for which
"we may not diſtort a few arguments to ſa-
"tisfy ourſelves."

Several months now paſſed, and no intelligence was yet received of Sir Charles and Lady Belmont. The houſe Agatha had hired was almoſt ready for her reception, and ſhe had engaged two female ſervants who were to be all her houſhold. Yet, though more than ever alarmed on account of her parents, Agatha felt much more eaſy concerning Hammond,

mond, whoſe tranquility ſeemed in a great meaſure reſtored. The dejection, formerly ſo viſible, was now leſſened. He liſtened to Mrs. Herbert's ſprightly converſation with apparent pleaſure; and though his eſſential regard for Agatha was not in the leaſt abated, though he yet looked up to her as to a being of a ſuperior order, and hung with delight on every word ſhe uttered, the ſtarts of paſſion, the gloom of dejection which had embittered the hours he paſſed with her, were now no more. He left her with pain, yet without anguiſh; and met her with pleaſure, though without tranſport. In ſhort, their attachment was that of love refined into a friendſhip of the ſweeteſt kind; a friendſhip ſimilar to that which, in married life, ſucceeds to and ſurpaſſes the firſt tranſports of love.

Mr. and Mrs. William Milſon were the moſt intimate of their friends, and the moſt frequent gueſts at the houſe of Mr. Ormiſtace. On one of thoſe days when they and Hammond only were expected, and leſs welcome viſitants excluded, the converſation after dinner turned on a firſt love.

"I am certainly," ſaid Mrs. Milſon, "one "of the leaſt jealous perſons in England, for "my moſt intimate friend, my ſiſter except-"ed, was my huſband's firſt love, and another "of my beſt friends was his ſecond."

"True," ſaid Mrs. Herbert, "but poets, "you know, ſeldom marry their Delias. "There muſt be a ſubject for the muſe, who "or what is immaterial; Shenſtone's I have "been told, though I will not vouch for the "truth of it, was either his cook or his "waſherwoman."

"But what is ſtrange," ſaid Mrs. Milſon, "though I have married a poet, he has never "addreſſed a ſingle diſtich to me——yet, "ſtranger ſtill, I am perfectly ſatisfied with-"out. I flatter myſelf he regards me with "that eſteem on which I build all my hopes "of happineſs. I allow him to think fifty "women handſomer, but I hope he will "never find one of the rectitude of whoſe "intentions or conduct he will have an high-"er opinion. I feel a pleaſure in tracing the "youthful emotions of that heart towards "others, whoſe ſerious and laſting regards

"are

" are fixed on me. Beſides my very name " ſhut me out of the poetical world. What " a figure would Sarah have made in a poem! " —You muſt abſolutely new chriſten me, " Mr. Milſon."

" Not for the world!" replied Mr. Milſon with energy, " I would not exchange even a " letter of your name."

" Thank you a thouſand times," ſaid Mrs. Milſon. " One compliment like this ſpoken " in proſe and from the heart is worth all the " verſe in the world. But will you be diſ- " pleaſed if I produce the little poem that " pleaſed me ſo much when I found it by " accident, addreſſed, I believe, to that lady," ſmiling and looking at Agatha.

" 'Tis not worth it," replied Mr. Milſon; " but if you wiſh it, and Miſs Belmont will " not be offended——"

" Surely not," anſwered Agatha. " The " ſubject of the muſe is generally as much a " creature of the imagination as the muſe " herſelf; and if we were not previouſly in- " formed that the picture was taken for me, no " one would, I dare ſay, diſcover the likeneſs."

Mrs. Milſon then took out of her pocket book, and read the poem ſhe mentioned, of which the following is a copy:

O! that I were a Sylph to fly
Through the light air my Love to ſhield!
To hover near that ſpeaking eye,
Where all thy ſpotleſs ſoul's reveal'd!

Unſeen—unfelt—to touch that cheek,
And preſs thoſe lips of vermeil hue,
Or in thy poliſh'd temples ſeek
The veins of ſoft, celeſtial blue!

My taſk, delighted, it ſhould be,
With light and viewleſs wing to ſcreen
The fierce ſun's ſcorching rays from thee,
Or the cold blaſts of winter keen:

To fan, with humid breath, the flowers,
And bid their ſweets for thee exhale;
To ſhelter from deſtructive ſhowers,
Thy ſoft auric'la's duſty veil:

To tend the roſebud's verdant womb,
And bid th' impriſon'd ſweets expand,
Or guard the rich plumb's purple bloom,
Till gather'd by that lovelieſt hand:

To

To watch whene'er thy mind ſhould yield
To downy ſleep's reſiſtleſs ſway,
By potent ſpells that ſleep to ſhield,
From each dark phantom of diſmay;

While ev'ry dream of gay delight,
Should to thy happy pillow fly,
With fairy ſcenes ſweet ſounds unite,
Till ev'ry ſenſe was extacy!

Yet when I gaz'd upon that face,
All mem'ry but of *that* were o'er;
I could, as now, but view each grace,
Then ſigh—and tremble—and adore!

When Mr. and Mrs. Milſon were gone, Mrs. Herbert was called out of the room, and Agatha remained alone with Hammond. After a ſilence of ſome minutes during which ſhe appeared loſt in thought, "Hammond," ſaid Agatha, "Mr. and Mrs. Milſon *are* "happy."

"They are," replied Hammond, "per-"fectly ſo."

"And yet," rejoined Agatha, "ſhe was "not the firſt object of his attachment. He

"is

" is happy—would it not therefore have been
" weak indeed if he had ſacrificed his com-
" fort to the romantic idea of marrying only
" the woman he could *not* marry? O Ham-
" mond! ſhall I ſpeak it!—I have often
" thought what this day has confirmed. You
" are formed for domeſtic happineſs; formed
" to make happy; and ſupremely ſo, the wo-
" man, whomever ſhe be, that you marry.
" *My* doom is fixed—irrevocably fixed! yet
" deny me not the bleſſing of exulting in
" *your* felicity. Heaven may call me hence
" to join my parents even now perhaps at reſt
" for ever. Let me not leave you comfort-
" leſs! Let me enjoy the ſweet, the conſo-
" latory reflection, that when I am gone, there
" are others to attach you to life, and render
" exiſtence a bleſſing! others yet dearer—
" whoſe filial cares ſhall lighten the evils of
" life, and in the ſeaſon of decrepitude ſup-
" port and cheriſh you till with pious hand
" they cloſe your eyes in the laſt awful ſcene.
" And even then you ſhall not *all* die. Your
" virtues ſhall live in the remembrance of
" your children; while their piety, the fruit of

" your

" your precepts and example, ſhall bid your " name be revered even to after ages; and " aſcending as incenſe to Heaven, encreaſe " (if it admit of encreaſe) your happineſs in " the abodes of bliſs.—You are ſilent, my " friend. I will not purſue the ſubject now; (perceiving Hammond too deeply affected for utterance) " but reflect upon what I have " ſaid in your cooler moments; and if you " *have* ſeen a woman whom, beſides your " Agatha, you can perfectly eſteem——"

Mrs. Herbert now entered, and ignorant of what had paſſed, entered with an air of vivacity; but obſerving the countenances of Agatha and Hammond, her feeling heart inſtantly caught the alarm, and though fearful of renewing their diſtreſs by enquiring the cauſe, ſhe checked her gaiety in a moment, and with a voice and manner of the moſt ſoothing tenderneſs, endeavoured by gentle degrees to diſſipate the cloud that hung on the brow of her friends.

During the remainder of the evening, Hammond was ſilent, thoughtful, and dejected. Agatha aſſumed a vivacity—but it evidently

evidently *was* aſſumed; her tremulous voice betrayed the agitation ſhe ſtrove to ſtifle; and when ſhe ſmiled, the tears ſometimes forced their way in ſpite of every effort to ſuppreſs them.

At night Mrs. Herbert attended Agatha to her room, and ſpeaking with the utmoſt tenderneſs, "Shall I, or ſhall I not," ſhe ſaid, "aſk the cauſe of the uneaſineſs too apparent "on my entrance this evening? But if the "enquiry pain you or renew a diſtreſſing ſub-"ject, do not anſwer it. Yet ſurely nothing "that I, in any of my heedleſs humours, "have ſaid, has hurt either you or Ham-"mond? I would rather tie my tongue for a "twelvemonth than give a moment's pain to "either."

"Far from it, my dear friend," ſaid Agatha, "your charming vivacity delights but "never diſtreſſes me. The cauſe was totally "different. One day, perhaps, you will know "what paſſed—at preſent, I think I had ra-"ther not reveal it."

"Enough, my love," returned Mrs. Herbert, "I am perfectly ſatisfied. It was a "wiſh

" wiſh to remove your uneaſineſs and not a " childiſh curioſity that prompted the en- " quiry."

When Mrs. Herbert was gone, Agatha gave way to a flood of tears, which, on the ſtretch as her mind had been for ſome hours, was the greateſt relief. Long as ſhe had ceaſed to regard Hammond in any light but that of friend, and long as ſhe had been endeavouring to accuſtom her mind to the idea of his marrying another, ſhe felt the trial more ſevere when it came to the point than the enthuſiaſm of her virtue had ſuffered her to expect. Yet the greater the pain ſhe felt, the ſtronger, ſhe believed, the neceſſity of urging him thus to deſtroy both in himſelf and her every faint ray of hope, which love, in deſpite of reaſon, might unguardedly cheriſh. And ſhall I, ſhe ſaid, when Hammond may be the happieſt of huſbands and of fathers, and give and receive a thouſand bleſſings unknown but in the ſweet circle of domeſtic life, ſhall I wiſh to ſhut him out from theſe, becauſe *I* cannot be the happy being that ſhares them with him? —No! periſh the ſelfiſh thought! May he be happy!

—my

—my heart ſhall break if it accede not to all that can make him ſo.

By degrees, Agatha, long accuſtoned to ſubdue her feelings, became more and more tranquil, and reconciled to the idea which ſhe believed it her duty to cheriſh; but Hammond appeared at times abſent and dejected, and ſtudiouſly avoided giving her an opportunity of renewing the ſubject.

CHAP. VI.

AFTER ſome weeks had thus paſſed, a meſſenger came from Mr. Ormiſtace who was in London on ſome pecuniary buſineſs, to deſire Mrs. Herbert and (he hoped) Agatha and Hammond to attend him there, ſince he feared he ſhould be detained longer than he had at firſt apprehended. As the finiſhing Agatha's habitation had been unavoidably delayed, and as Mrs. Herbert aſſured her ſhe might live with as much, and even more privacy in London than in the country, ſhe conſented to go; and Hammond, who had

had himſelf buſineſs there, gladly attended them. Mr. Ormiſtace had taken lodgings in Hollis-ſtreet for the time he remained in London, and to theſe Mrs. Herbert and Agatha went, Hammond taking others at a ſmall diſtance from them.

As Agatha as well as Mrs. Herbert had frequently expreſſed to Hammond a wiſh to ſee Mrs. Ammerville, pleaſed with the deſcription he had given of her, and conſidering her as inſtrumental in reſtoring him to his country, he called upon them one morning ſoon after their arrival in London, and entreated them to accompany him thither, aſſuring them, that though not apprized of their viſit, ſhe would receive with pleaſure any friends he ſhould introduce to her. The carriage was immediately ordered, and Mrs. Herbert and Agatha, who, to avoid particularity, concealed her dreſs as much as poſſible by a hat and long cloak, proceeded with Hammond to Mrs. Ammerville's in Bedford-ſquare.

On delivering the name of Hammond, they were inſtantly ſhewn into an elegant dreſſing

dreſſing room up ſtairs, where Mrs. Ammerville was at work engaged in converſation with Siſter Agnes and Madame St. Clermont. Agatha flew to meet them, but overpowered by the ſudden and violent emotions of her joy, ſunk into a chair, incapable of utterance. Mrs. Ammerville ran for hartſhorn, while the gentle Siſter Agnes threw her arms round Agatha's neck and wept on her boſom, and Madame St. Clermont conjured her to compoſe her ſpirits in a voice and manner which ſhewed that her own were little leſs agitated. When a flood of tears had ſomewhat relieved her, Agatha impatiently enquired, now of Siſter Agnes, and now of Madame St. Clermont, what happy event had thus reſtored them to each other; and learned, that Madame St. Clermont, whoſe ſiſter was mother to Mrs. Ammerville, had, after her eſcape from France, retired to a convent in Spain, intending there to have paſſed the remainder of her life; but being adviſed on account of an illneſs, the conſequence of the fatigue ſhe had undergone, to try the efficacy of the Bath waters, ſhe had come to England

with

with Siſter Agnes, whom ſhe had fortunately met in a cottage among the Pyrenean Mountains, and who had accompanied her to Spain, and entered the convent with her.

On Agatha apologizing to Mrs. Ammerville for the confuſion and trouble ſhe had occaſioned, "I ought rather," Mrs. Ammerville replied, "to aſk your excuſe for my inadvertency in ſuffering you to have ſo abrupt and, to one of your ſenſibility it might have been, ſo dangerous a meeting with your friends; but when the ſervant told me, that Mr. Hammond and two ladies were below, it did not occur to me that one of them might be the Miſs Belmont of whom I had ſo often heard, and who I knew had been placed under my aunt's protection. But let us be no longer an impediment to your pleaſure. Friends ſo dear to each other, and ſo unfortunately ſeparated, will have many things they are impatient to hear and communicate, which the preſence of ſtrangers to any one of the party will prevent."

"Certainly," ſaid Mrs. Herbert, "a circumſtantial

" cumſtantial detail when any one but thoſe " to whom we would particularly addreſs it " is in company, and where the eyes of all " are of courſe fixed on the ſpeaker, is pain- " ful and unpleaſant to all parties."

Mrs. Ammerville now roſe, and followed by Hammond and Mrs. Herbert, went into another apartment, leaving Madame St. Clermont, Agatha, and Siſter Agnes, to recite, in the anxiouſly-impatient ear of friendſhip, all that had befallen them ſince their ſeparation. —Before Agatha began her own long and melancholy narrative, ſhe entreated Madame St. Clermont and Siſter Agnes to inform her of the particulars of their eſcape.

" Mine," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " contained as few events as the nature of my " ſituation would admit. Eſcaping before " the mob returned, I was met by our ve- " nerable confeſſor at the diſtance of a mile " from the convent. Anxious for the ſafety " of his little flock, and aware of the im- " pending ſtorm, he had procured ſeveral " diſguiſes, which he had concealed in a hol- " low to which he led me, where leaving me

" imme-

" immediately, he haſtened to apprize others " of the circumſtance and conduct them to " the ſpot, after which, he purpoſed to con- " ceal himſelf in the houſe of a friend who " had promiſed to favour his eſcape.

" Putting on a peaſant's habit, I purſued " the road through Languedoc towards " Spain; ſometimes exciting ſuſpicion, and " being denied admiſſion into the houſes of " thoſe to whom I applied, and forced to " wander whole nights through wilds and " foreſts, at others received and accommoda- " ted with a bed, in return for the ſcanty pit- " tance I ventured to offer; and now and " then, though ſeldom, obtaining a horſe or " mule to take me part of my journey, and " reſt my weary limbs. At length, worn out " with fatigue, I ſtopped at a hut at the foot " of one of the Pyrenees, and too feeble to " ſupport myſelf, lay down at the door of it, " expecting there to breathe my laſt. Though " I heard voices within, I lay ſome hours be- " fore any one perceived me; at length a " woman eſpied me from a window. " God " help thee—what ails thee?" ſhe ſaid in a com-

" compaſſionate tone. I raiſed my head and
" endeavoured to reply, but was unable to
" ſpeak. The woman then opened the door,
" and with the aſſiſtance of her huſband and
" his father carried me into the houſe, and
" laid me on a pallet of ſtraw. She then ap-
" plied to her little ſtock of medicines, and
" giving me a cordial, bid me chear up, for
" they would be very good to me. When I
" was ſufficiently recovered to ſpeak, I endea-
" voured to expreſs my gratitude for this
" kindneſs to a ſtranger. 'A ſtranger!' ſaid
" the woman, 'alas for thee! if in a ſtrange
" land the more need thou haſt of aſſiſtance.
" But I do no more to thee than I did to a
" ſick goat laſt week, and God bleſs me and
" mine only as I do well by others be they
" who they will—Chriſtians or creatures.'
" In ſhort, my dear ſiſter, I was treated,
" though with no more kindneſs than the ſick
" goat, with all the attention their benevo-
" lent hearts could deviſe, nor was I ſuffered
" to think of quitting their hut till I was per-
" fectly recovered, when the young man pro-
" miſed to be my guide through the moun-

" tains,

" tains, and, if I wiſhed it, to eſcort me
" into Spain."

" The day was fixed and every thing
" ready for my departure, and the good
" woman had juſt put up our little ſtock
" of proviſions, when the door opened and
" a youth entered, followed by my beloved
" Siſter Agnes. Imagine my tranſport on
" beholding her thus unexpectedly!—Our
" kind guide ſet out with us the next
" morning, and conducted us ſafely through
" great part of the Province of Arragon,
" not leaving us till we reached Saragoſſa,
" where a relation of my ſiſter's huſband
" reſided. I made myſelf known to him,
" and having through his means made ſome
" amends to our generous conductor, pro-
" ceeded with Siſter Agnes to my ſiſter's,
" and from thence to a convent near her
" country reſidence. What followed you
" already know. I have been only two
" days in London, where my happineſs in
" meeting one whom I ever regarded as a
" child is greater than I can find words to
" expreſs."

"Heaven bleſs and reward thoſe kind "and hoſpitable cottagers!" ſaid Agatha with fervour, when Madame St. Clermont had cloſed her narrative, "may no ſtorms "ſhake their hut from without, no cala- "mity wreck its peace within! virtue is "never more ſtrikingly intereſting than "when ſhe appears under the coarſe fea- "tures of ruſtic ſimplicity——the child of "nature rather than of education: or is it, "that ſeeing her adorned with all her love- "lieſt graces where we leaſt expected to "find them, our wonder encreaſes our ad- "miration?—And now, my beloved Ag- "nes," continued Agatha, "I wait with "impatience to hear by what ſtrange chance "our hopes were fruſtrated and we loſt "each other in the general tumult, and "what happy circumſtance brought you to "the friendly hut that ſheltered Madame "St. Clermont."

"How ſhall I tell my deareſt Con- "ſtance," ſaid Siſter Agnes, "how confeſs "to her that a romantic and, in my caſe, I

"fear,

" fear, a *culpable* weakneſs was the cauſe of
" our ſeparation—the cauſe of the terror
" and miſery you perhaps endured in con-
" ſequence of it? O Conſtance! I had a
" miniature—a reſemblance but too ſtriking
" of my poor Dorville! 'It lay in my bo-
" ſom, and was unto me as a daughter—'no
" treaſure on earth could have tempted me
" to part with this dear memento of happier
" days. Even when my mind was reſigned, as
" I believed, to my fate, I would gaze on it
" —talk to it—bid the ſainted ſpirit of him
" it reſembled look down from Heaven,
" and witneſs my faithful affection to its
" earthly repreſentative. The firſt and laſt
" object in every year I gazed upon it; the
" firſt and laſt words addreſſed to it. Was
" it ſhame for my weakneſs, or the roman-
" tic delight of preſerving the dear remem-
" brancer unknown to, unſeen by any other,
" that induced me to conceal the circum-
" ſtance from you, when I related, con-
" trary to your prudent wiſhes, my paſt
" though ſtill-ſurviving ſorrows?—but I

"know I did conceal it. On the morning
"of the day in which we were forced to
"forſake the convent, I well remember
"talking to it both in the garden and in
"my cell. The ribbon by which it was
"ſuſpended to my boſom, by ſome acci-
"dent was broken; and the bell ringing
"for None, I left the picture, as I think,
"in my cell. In the alarm and terror that
"ſucceeded, my little treaſure was for ſome
"hours forgotten; but recollecting it at
"the moment in which we were preparing
"to depart, I flew to my cell to ſecure it,
"at the inſtant I ſaw you enter yours. I
"ſearched for it in every part of my cell,
"but to no purpoſe. Imagining I might
"have dropped it in the garden, and that
"by ſome bleſt chance it might have eſ-
"caped the ravagers, I ran thither to ſeek
"it. When I opened the door, I heard
"the mob ſhouting at a diſtance, and ſaw
"every one flying from the convent. Still,
"however, I purſued my purpoſe, and ran
"to the garden. But my ſearch there was

"equally

"equally fruitleſs. The ſhouts now ad-
"vancing nearer, I returned to the convent
"for you—but you was gone. It grew
"darker every moment, a dead ſtillneſs
"reigned in the deſerted walls—and every
"one was fled. I ran to your cell, to my
"own, but all were alike deſerted. In
"hopes of overtaking you, I determined to
"leave the convent without another mo-
"ment's delay. As I paſſed through the
"door of the chapel, ſomething caught
"hold of my gown. Almoſt loſing my
"ſenſes in my terror, I believed it was
"one of the mob, and not daring to ſpeak,
"flew like lightening I knew not whither,
"till at laſt I ſtopped, breathleſs and faint,
"at the door of a cottage. An aged pea-
"ſant brought a light, and looking at me,
"bid me fear nothing. Then ſpeaking to
"his wife and children, they ſupported and
"led me into the houſe; and ſeeing me
"feeble and exhauſted, the woman and her
"daughter undreſſed and put me to bed in
"a ſmall back room, conjuring me, in a

" whiſper, not to ſpeak. The daughter
" ſoon after brought me refreſhments, and
" ſitting down by my bed ſide watched me
" during an hour with mute though tender
" attention. My kind nurſe then aſked me
" in a low voice if I had any further occa-
" ſion for her; and on my aſſuring her that
" I had not, and beginning to expreſs my
" gratitude, ſhe gently put her finger on
" my lips and bidding me a good night
" left me. The next morning ſhe again
" attended me, and after aſſiſting me to
" dreſs, ſilently brought my breakfaſt and
" placed it on a table before me; ſhe then
" went out, ſhut the door gently, and lock-
" ed it. I know not whether my aſtoniſh-
" ment or gratitude was predominant.
" The extreme ſilence and ſecrecy preſerv-
" ed around me, with the precaution of
" locking my door, once led me to ſuſpect
" the ſincerity of my entertainers, ignorant
" as I then was of the extreme hazard thoſe
" incurred who ventured to give ſhelter to
" obnoxious or ſuſpected perſons. But the

" cruel

" cruel doubt inſtantly vaniſhed, and my
" heart as inſtantly reproached me for the
" ungenerous ſuggeſtion.—In ſome hours
" the old man came, and unlocked my
" door ſoftly and again faſtening it after
" him, ſat down by me, and in a whiſper
" aſſured me that I was now ſafe, for that
" he had every where ſpread the report of
" my death. 'You may therefore,' con-
" tinued he, 'purſue your way without dan-
" ger. You was ſeen to enter my houſe
" laſt night, but I have aſſured every one I
" met that you died immediately afterwards,
" and that my ſon threw your body into
" the lake.' My aſtoniſhment was not
" leſſened by this extraordinary aſſurance,
" and I was preparing to reply, when he
" made a ſign to me to be ſilent, and con-
" tinued, ſtill in a whiſper. 'Shame as it
" is to your countrymen, your benevolence
" has but drawn down upon you the reſent-
" ment of thoſe whoſe prayers you merited,
" but who have long grudged you the poſ-
" ſeſſion of that wealth, the greateſt part of

" which you beſtowed in charity on them.
" But you ſhall not have it to ſay or think
" that *all* are ungrateful—the bleſſed Virgin
" forbid it. Your bounty in the time of
" need, your medicines and advice, ſaved
" the lives of my ſon and daughter, and
" though I and they were to periſh for pro-
" tecting you, we ſhould think ourſelves
" bound to do it. But my houſe muſt and
" will be bleſſed for having had an angel
" under its roof—the dear, the good An-
" gel of Auvergne! my daughter ſhall
" furniſh you with cloaths to prevent your
" being known, and you ſhall ſet out at
" night on horſeback, attended by my
" ſon, who would die to ſerve you: my
" wife has a daughter who is married to a
" goat-herd in the Pyrenees. You will be
" ſafe there till you can ſend to your friends
" wherever they are.'—Think what I felt
" on this diſcovery. Either from a ſlight
" reſemblance which ſome have remarked
" in our perſons, or from my having ſome-
" times performed the office of her almo-

" ner,

"ner, I found I was miſtaken for my be-
"loved Siſter Conſtance, and had received
"the kind offices which were deſigned for
"her. You will imagine that I could not
"bear the idea of continuing the decep-
"tion, and impoſing on my generous pre-
"ſerver by perſonating my friend:—my
"mind ſpurned the thought, however my
"ſafety might be endangered by the con-
"feſſion. Conjuring him therefore to ſuf-
"fer me to ſpeak, I aſſured him that his
"gratitude had miſtaken its object, that I
"was not the excellent nun who had de-
"ſervedly been called the Angel of Au-
"vergne. He heard me with evident ſur-
"prize and regret, but made no reply; and
"going out immediately, locked the door
"as uſual. I ſaw no one for ſeveral hours;
"at laſt the young woman entered, and
"ſetting a repaſt before me, made ſigns for
"me to partake of it. In a ſhort time af-
"terwards her father returned, and laid a
"paper on the table before me, making
"ſigns to me to read it. The contents were
"theſe:"

" I dare not ſpeak to you. This houſe " joins another whoſe inhabitants are de- " mocrats and my bittereſt enemies: they " wait but a pretext to deſtroy me. When " I ventured to converſe with you this " morning, I had watched, and knew they " were abſent from home. But even then " I trembled while you ſpoke; for ſpies " are every where, and the voice of a " ſtranger might have been my ruin. Fear " not but I will protect you, ſince Heaven " has thrown you in my way, though you " are not the Angel: your nobleneſs in " confeſſing that you are not, entitles you " to my care. My ſon ſhall go with you " to night; but do not ſpeak to him till " you are many miles from hence. Should " you ſee the Angel, tell her, if ſhe can " come to me, I will preſerve her, though " at the peril of my life. Tell her I pray " for her night and morning. God pre- " ſerve you likewiſe.—Give this paper " to my daughter to deſtroy before you " go."

" In

" In the evening the diſguiſe was
" brought to me. The tender-hearted girl
" wept as ſhe aſſiſted me to put it on; and
" whiſpering a bleſſing led me to her bro-
" ther. He placed me on a horſe, and
" walked himſelf by my ſide. During
" part of our tedious journey, I obliged
" him to mount the horſe, while I walk-
" ed; and when we were at a ſufficient
" diſtance from Iſſoire to eſcape detection,
" we ſtopped ſome days to reſt the faith-
" ful companion of our flight. Paſſing
" for a peaſant and his ſiſter, a tale the
" truth of which his appearance and con-
" verſation led no one to ſuſpect, we were
" ſuffered to paſs without moleſtation
" through the Province of Languedoc,
" and purſuing our journey by eaſy ſtages,
" arrived happily at the place of our deſti-
" nation, which proved to be the very cot-
" tage that had given ſhelter to Madame
" St. Clermont.—And now, my deareſt
" Conſtance, I wait with anxiety and ter-
" ror the recital of all that has befallen

" you. How will the diſtreſſes you may " have endured reproach me as their cauſe, " ſince my romantic folly occaſioned our " ſeparation!"

" Let me conjure you to ſilence theſe " ſelf-reproaches, my beloved ſiſter," ſaid Agatha. " The awful volume of fate is " concealed from our view; and who ſhall " dare to ſay what would have been the " conſequences had the events been other " than they have been? Our ſeparation " might be ordained for the wiſeſt of pur- " poſes. The protectors each of us found " might have been miſſed. Our ſteps " would have been differently directed; " and inſtead of the ſafety we preſaged " in each other's ſociety, we might have " been involved in diſtreſſes from which " we might not at laſt have been thus hap- " pily extricated."

" Doubtleſs," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, " the foreſight of erring mortals " cannot direct events ſo properly as they " are diſpoſed by the great Author and

" Diſpoſer

" Diſpoſer of all things. But your friend-
" ly endeavour to ſet the mind of Siſter
" Agnes at eaſe, and to reconcile her to
" herſelf, does not exempt her from blame,
" who, in a moment on which her own
" and your ſafety depended, could forget a
" dear and deſerving friend in her anxiety
" for an inanimate treaſure—the picture of
" her lover! Forgive me, my dear Siſter,
" I am not accuſtomed to conceal or gloſs
" over my real ſentiments. When our
" attachment to even an inanimate object
" becomes a paſſion, and is ſuffered to in-
" terfere with our duties, it is ſurely con-
" demnable. Every weak, every idle in-
" dulgence ſhould be nipped in the bud:
" if ſuffered to grow and flouriſh, its fruit
" is poiſon."

" Enough, my dear Madame St. Cler-
" mont," ſaid Siſter Agnes, " I feel and
" acknowledge my fault; and bleſs Hea-
" ven whoſe mercy has withheld the pu-
" niſhment it deſerved."

Agatha now related the particulars of her

eſcape from France, with the various incidents that delayed it. When ſhe came to that part of her narrative which deſcribed the miſerable death of Madame Dorville, Siſter Agnes was for ſeveral minutes too deeply affected to bear the recital. "Gra-
"cious Heaven!" ſhe at laſt exclaimed,
"how juſt and awful are thy Judgements!
"Thus, then, periſhed the unhappy Ma-
"dame Dorville: and with her periſh eve-
"ry remains of my reſentment! God of
"thy mercy hear her contrite prayers!
"and as her penitence was ſincere, and her
"earthly ſufferings great, avert the dread-
"ed future, and receive her ſoul to mer-
"cy!"

When Siſter Agnes was ſufficiently compoſed, Agatha reſumed her narrative. She concealed nothing from Madame St. Clermont and Siſter Agnes; deſcribing Hammond's unfortunate attachment, and her own ſufferings in conſequence of it, with her laſt painful endeavour to cruſh every deluſive hope.

"Come

"Come to my boſom, my beloved, my "more than ever beloved Siſter," ſaid Madame St. Clermont. "Nobly indeed "have you ſuſtained the conflict; and were "you never to receive any other reward, "the approbation of your own heart muſt "in the end amply repay you. But ima- "gine not, my ſweet friend, that ſeeing "you ſo conſtantly as I find Mr. Ham- "mond does, he *can* love another. If you "would accompliſh this point, you muſt "meet leſs frequently. Let the ſociety of "others become neceſſary, and it may poſ- "ſibly in time become dear to him. But "why wiſh him to marry? Time and rea- "ſon will doubtleſs deſtroy every weak "hope that yet remains: why, therefore, "give an unneceſſary pang to your own ge- "nerous heart, already too deeply a ſuf- "ferer?"

"My dear Madame St. Clermont," ſaid Agatha, "if my heart felt *only* friendſhip "for Hammond, would it ſuffer a pang on "ſeeing him another's? and if it does yet

"inadvertently

"inadvertently cheriſh an attachment more
"tender, ought it not to be ſurmounted?
"—Am I not by my vows devoted to
"God alone?"

"Noble! excellent woman!" ſaid Madame St. Clermont. "O! did the feeble ſlaves
"of paſſion witneſs your ſelf-command, how
"would they bluſh at their own weakneſs,
"and ſpurning every propenſity that op-
"poſe their duty, emulate in future your
"noble example: and to will ſincerely, is
"to perform."

After ſome further converſation, Madame St. Clermont, Agatha, and Siſter Agnes, returned to Mrs. Ammerville, Mrs. Herbert, and Hammond, whom they found now joined by Mr. Ammerville and Mr. Ormiſtace; Mrs. Ammerville having ſent to the latter to requeſt him to join the ſociety of happy friends whom ſhe could not conſent to part with till the evening.

During the time Agatha and Mrs. Herbert remained in London, few days paſſed in

in which they did not ſee Mrs. Ammerville and her amiable gueſts. As they were going to Bedford Square one morning, they were ſtopped by a ſtring of coaches, and before they were able to proceed, they ſaw a perſon go into a hatter's, whoſe ſingular dreſs and manner excited Mrs. Herbert's attention, not leſs than her face did that of Agatha, to whom every feature ſeemed familiar, though ſhe in vain endeavoured to recollect where ſhe had ſeen her. She had on a green riding habit, with few if any petticoats under it, a neckcloth in holes, and not of the cleaneſt, and a white riding hat, with a poppy coloured feather in it. Her hair was faſhionably dreſſed, and her face highly rouged. They obſerved her in the ſhop, examining and trying on ſeveral hats; at laſt, coming to the door in one of them, ſhe eſpied Agatha, whom ſhe inſtantly recognized. Heedleſs of the attraction her ſingular appearance excited, ſhe ran to the door of the coach, and putting her hand in at the window, rather ſeized than

than took hold of Agatha's. "My dear "Conſtance!" ſhe exclaimed, "do you "not know me?"

"Siſter Frances!" ſaid Agatha, in aſtoniſhment.

"Even ſo, I aſſure you; though no lon-"ger Siſter Frances, but Madame La Rive. "I am married, my dear."

"Married?"

"O! yes, I told you I ſhould be; and "though I had not ſo many offers as I ex-"pected, I had one, which, you know, if "you mean to accept it is as good as a "hundred. Have you had many lovers!"

"I did not deſire any."

"Poor thing! I pity you. I am very "happy, I aſſure you. My huſband, poor "fellow! was obliged to fly his country al-"moſt as ſoon as we were married. We "had not time to bring over even a change "of linen with us. Since, however, by "good luck we ſecured a little money, I "mean to buy ſome; but I could not re-"ſiſt the temptation of buying a black hat

"firſt,

" firſt, they are ſo becoming—though our " finances are rather low."

" And where is your huſband?"

" At home—at our lodgings, and very " poorly; he has never recovered his ſea- " ſickneſs, I believe. He ſits there, ſhi- " vering over a little fire, with his red " night-cap on, no ſhirt, for it's gone to " be waſhed—the moſt diſmal figure you " ever beheld. You would laugh to ſee " him, poor creature!—But I do aſſure " you, that though he is not the handſomeſt " man in the world, we are a very happy " couple."

" Good God! and thus diſtreſſed!" ſaid Agatha. " Siſter Frances, your levity is " ſhocking."

" Why now would fretting mend our ſi- " tuation?—Nothing on earth but a con- " vent could make me melancholy; and " even that ſometimes failed, as you have " witneſſed."

" And what means of ſubſiſtence have " you?"

" We

"We have not thought of it yet; what "we brought is not all gone."

"Accept of this," ſaid Agatha, offering her purſe—"we were *Siſters* you know. "But let me conjure you to purchaſe ne- "ceſſaries *firſt*. Have a phyſician to your "huſband if he is ill."

"Thank you," ſaid Siſter Frances, tak- ing the purſe, "you are a good creature! "and I will do as you deſire me. But a "phyſician would do him no good in the "world; for I don't believe he *can* take "phyſic, unleſs it's palatable: I know *I* "never could. But will you go and ſee "him, ſince you are ſo good?"

As Agatha could not conveniently com- ply with her requeſt that day, ſhe took her direction, and promiſed to call the next.

"And pray," ſaid Madame La Rive, "have you heard or ſeen any thing of the "reſt of the ſiſterhood?—I wonder where "my good Lady Abbeſs is—whether ſhe "has relaxed from her ſeverity of manners, "and made ſome good man happy?"

"Far

"Far from it," replied Agatha; "ſhe "is the ſame eſtimable character ſhe ever "was."

"Fie! what a reflection on me! And "after all, what have I done wrong? I "made you a promiſe that I would be "married—the promiſe of a truly good "perſon is as ſacred as their oath; and I "could not, conſiſtently with my conſci-"ence, have broken my word."

"But your vows! Siſter Frances!"

"O! my vows were not more binding "than the promiſe I made to you: not ſo "much ſo, indeed; for that was voluntary, "they were compulſatory: and which was "made firſt, the promiſe or the vow, is of "little importance.—But where is Ma-"dame St. Clermont? tell me, that I may "avoid her—for I would not have one of "her lectures for the world."

"She is in London."

"In London! O! Heavens!"

The carriage being now at liberty to proceed, Agatha took leave for the preſent of

of the thoughtleſs Siſter Frances. When ſhe came to Mrs. Ammerville's, ſhe communicated to Madame St. Clermont her extraordinary interview with Siſter Frances.

"Her levity," ſaid Madame St. Clermont, "is incorrigible, and I always be-"lieved it ſo; but I did not imagine ſhe ſe-"riouſly intended to marry; for I have "known many a volatile character, whoſe "moral and religious principles were as "ſtrict as thoſe of the moſt ſerious and "preciſe. Victim of a father's pride, ſhe "certainly deſerves our pity; and it ſhall "be my prayer that her crime may be for-"given."

"And mine," ſaid Agatha, "while I "will endeavour all in my power to ſerve "her; and if there are any means by "which her huſband can maintain her, "will enable him to purſue them."

The next morning Agatha and Mrs. Herbert went to Siſter Frances's lodgings; and enquiring at the door of the houſe for

Madame

Madame La Rive, were ſhewn into a dirty and half-furniſhed apartment up two pair of ſtairs, in which ſat M. La Rive, exactly in the ſituation his wife had deſcribed, cloſe to a miſerable fire, in a red night-cap, a ruſty black coat, buttoned cloſe, and dirty white ſtockings; his coarſe and irregular features rendered more diſagreeable by the hollowneſs of his eyes, and the ſallowneſs of his complexion.

"O! here you are!" ſaid Madame La Rive; "Jeanbon, this is the good creature "I told you of. And now, Conſtance, "continued ſhe laughing, is not he a de-"plorable figure? I would not deſire a "better ſubject for a caricature."

"My vife be ſi gaie, ſi vive," ſaid M. La Rive, "ſhe be très bonne compag-non!"

Alas! thought Agatha, a companion leſs diverting, and a friend more kind, would be far better in your ſituation.

"In conſequence of what you ſaid yeſ-"terday," ſaid Madame La Rive, "I "have

"have been endeavouring to think of ſome "means of ſupport for us both, when our "money is gone."

"I am happy to hear it," ſaid Agatha, "and will gladly give you every aſſiſtance "in my power."

"Why then, you know, the Engliſh are "wondrous fond of ſights—I was thinking "of exhibiting M. La Rive for a ſhilling "a piece, under the name of the handſome "Frenchman."

"O! no—O! no—my dear," replied M. La Rive, underſtanding her ſeriouſly, "O que non—C'eſt me flatter trop. I "have not dc vanitè to tink of dat. Mais, "cependant, I vas de hanſomeſt man in "de Province if it vas not been for my "face."

"True, very true, Jeanbon; 'tis a thou-"ſand pities your head is not off—that "alone might, perhaps, make my fortune "at Rome—a century ago I am *ſure* it "would, for it might very well have paſſed "for John the Baptiſt's."

"Ah!

"Ah! c'eſt bien drole!" ſaid M. La Rive, ſmiling hideouſly, "My vife be très "amuſante—elle a tant d'eſprit!"

Agatha now enquired of M. La Rive his former ſituation in life, and learned that he had been a painter of ſome eminence; but that having been employed by ſeveral of the French nobility, by whom he had been warmly patronized, he had become obnoxious to the then ruling powers, and was therefore compelled to quit his country.

After promiſing to aſſiſt him as far as lay in their power, Agatha and Mrs. Herbert roſe to take their leave.

"Jeanbon!" ſaid Madame La Rive, "why don't you offer to hand the ladies "to their carriage?—Where is your French "gallantry?"

"Sit ſtill, M. La Rive, I entreat you," ſaid Agatha, ſeeing him feebly attempting to riſe, "you are ill, and I would not diſ- "turb you on any account."

"Ah! c'eſt vrai," ſaid M. La Rive,

"Je me porte mal—but I be gay, be hap-
"py—et voila tout!"

As ſoon as ſhe returned home, Agatha, with the aſſiſtance of Mr. Ormiſtace, procured a nurſe and an apothecary to attend M. La Rive; and when he was ſufficiently recovered to purſue his profeſſion, Mr. Ormiſtace obtained him a promiſe of conſtant employment from the maſter of a print-ſhop who had ſeen a ſpecimen of his performance. Madame La Rive, from her natural talents in the ſame line, was ſoon capable of aſſiſting her huſband; and before Agatha left London, ſhe had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing them placed above want, though the natural careleſsneſs and improvidence of Madame La Rive effectually prevented their ever enjoying a competency, however ſucceſsful in their profeſſion.

During their continuance in London, Hammond and Mr. Ormiſtace made every poſſible enquiry concerning Sir Charles and Lady Belmont, but were unable to gain any

information. It was certain they had never come to England; but they were probably yet alive, ſince, had they fallen the victims of popular fury, their death muſt have tranſpired. This hope, therefore, ſlender as it was, was now Agatha's ſole dependence; and ſhe eagerly clung to it as a refuge from deſpondency. "If they ſtill "live, ſhe would ſay to herſelf, we may "meet—may yet be happy—many dear "hours of comfort may yet be reſerved "for us—theſe dark clouds be at laſt diſ-"perſed, and the ſunſhine of peace gild the "evening of their days."

CHAP. VII.

AS ſoon as Mr. Ormiſtace had ſettled the buſineſs which brought him to London, he returned home with Mrs. Herbert, and Agatha, whoſe own houſe was now ready for her reception, went thither with Siſter Agnes, whom ſhe entreated to conſider it as her future home. Mr. and Mrs. Ammerville accompanied Madame St. Clermont to Bath; her health, having already received benefit from the change of climate, no longer requiring the attendance of Siſter Agnes.

Agatha now determined, in purſuance of Madame St. Clermont's advice, to ſee Hammond leſs frequently, whatever pain ſhe might feel from the privation of his ſociety. One morning, therefore, as he walked with her and Siſter Agnes in the little garden adjoining her houſe, ſhe made a ſign to Siſter Agnes to leave them.

"My

"My deareſt friend," ſaid Agatha, when Siſter Agnes was gone, "will I fear be "hurt when I entreat that we may not meet "ſo often. Attribute not the requeſt to "want of friendſhip or to an ingratitude "how foreign to my heart——but reaſons "which I cannot explain, render it ne-"ceſſary."

"Enough, Agatha," returned Hammond; "you was not ſatisfied till you "had withdrawn your love, and ſtifled if "not deſtroyed mine: our friendſhip muſt "now be annihilated; till every link of "the chain that attached me to you brok-"en, you exult in your emancipation. "Farewell, Agatha—once the miſtreſs, "ſince the friend of my heart—farewell! "May you be happy though I am miſera-"ble."

"Witneſs Heaven," ſaid Agatha, burſting into tears, "that life itſelf, and every "bleſſing it can give me, is as nothing "compared to your happineſs! 'tis that I "ſeek, and therefore would————"

"Sever our friendſhip."

"No, far from it. Nor would the taſk "be eaſily effected; it is not in the power "of time or abſence to deſtroy a friendſhip "like ours."

"It has ſevereſt virtue for its baſis,
"And ſuch a friendſhip ends not, but with life."

"And are we never to meet then?"

"Never! Heaven forbid. But let us meet "leſs frequently. Hammond, is it poſſi- "ble you can indeed doubt my friend- "ſhip?"

"I do not, Agatha—my beloved Aga- "tha, I do not doubt it. But ſome idle "caprice, the ſuggeſtion of ſome ſlave of "worldly prejudices, has occaſioned us "both this unneceſſary pain."

"Hammond, we have before agreed "that the world's good opinion is not to "be deſpiſed. But, whatever are my rea- "ſons, which at ſome future period you "will perhaps know, be aſſured the requeſt

"(for

" (for I cannot call it a wiſh) ſprings ſole-
" ly from anxiety for your happineſs, to
" which I would ſacrifice my life were it
" neceſſary."

" My Agatha, I believe you from my
" ſoul. Forgive my impetuoſity——I will
" be, will do all you deſire."

When Agatha next ſaw Mrs. Herbert, ſhe entreated her to endeavour, by thoſe friendly attentions which a heart feeling as hers knew ſo well how to adminiſter, to ſupply to Hammond the loſs of the ſociety of his other friend; Madame St. Clermont having adviſed, in order to deſtroy every poſſible remains of their former attachment, that their meetings ſhould be leſs frequent.

" I will comply with your requeſt, my
" dear," ſaid Mrs. Herbert; " and that as
" well for Hammond's ſake as yours: but
" the cauſe of theſe new meaſures is inex-
" plicable to me. Your love had ſubſided
" into friendſhip; would you go farther?
" would you tear even that up by the roots?

"—have a care, Agatha, or you will leave "your own heart as well as his a deſert."

"My dear Mrs. Herbert, you cannot be "more ſenſible of the value of Hammond's "friendſhip than I am."

"So I *once* thought——But of this I am "ſenſible, *I* would not give him a mo- "ment's unneceſſary pain."

"Nor I," ſaid Agatha, ſighing deeply; "his happineſs is the end of all my wiſhes, "the firſt bleſſing of my life——I wiſh but "to witneſs that, and I ſhall ſink into the "grave in peace."

"There is a myſtery in this, Agatha, "which I would fain penetrate; but it "mocks my boaſted diſcernment. Ma- "dame St. Clermont cannot have adviſed "——You cannot ſurely wiſh him to mar- "ry *another?*——It is improbable—im- "poſſible to ſuppoſe——"

"Not unleſs he can love another; if he "can, I would not for worlds be an obſta- "cle to his wiſhes."

"O my Agatha!—but what a ſtab "would that give to your boſom!"

"Why

"Why ſo? my deareſt Mrs. Herbert. "Why ſhould I, who profeſs to feel, who "actually do feel no happineſs ſuperior to "his, repine at ſeeing him a huſband— "a father—diſpenſing innumerable bleſ- "ſings to others, thoſe bleſſings recoiling "on himſelf?"

"Amazing excellence!" ſaid Mrs. Herbert; "but do you think that Hammond "*can* love another as he has loved you!"

"With as much truth, as much ſinceri- "ty, though poſſibly with leſs enthuſiaſm. "Can a heart generous and ſuſceptible as "Hammond's be ungrateful to the woman "who ſhall make his happineſs the ſtudy "of her life?—and who can marry Ham- "mond, and not make it their ſtudy? Then "muſt he not regard with exquiſite tender- "neſs her to whom he ſhall owe the endear- "ing name of father?"

"My Agatha—ſay no more—" ſaid Mrs. Herbert, endeavouring to ſuppreſs her tears; "what would I give there had "been no obſtacle to your union! you alone "deſerve him."

"That has long been out of the queſtion, "Emma: for a few weeks only I indulged "the hope of being his, for years I have "known it impoſſible; and it is on *his* "happineſs now that I build my own."

The converſation was then turned into another channel, and the ſubject was not for ſome time renewed.

Agatha and Siſter Agnes now, retired from the world, and bleſt with the ſociety of each other, found many comforts in their little dwelling, where the neatneſs and ſimple elegance that reigned every where beſpoke the ſuperior minds of its inhabitants. One room, conformable to the life of piety they had embraced, was ſacred to the offices of devotion, aud was called the chapel; another was fitted up as a library—and here their mornings were generally paſſed. Small as was Agatha's income, the excellence of her œconomy enabled her to allot a part of it to charity; and in the luxury of diſpenſing bleſſings to others, her heart felt lightened of its own burthens.

When

When Agatha next ſaw Hammond, ſhe obſerved with pleaſure that his mind ſeemed tranquil, and his ſpirits no longer dejected. He converſed chearfully on ſeveral ſubjects, ſpoke of the comfort he had received from the ſociety of his other friends, and though he was abſent at times, it did not appear the abſence of a perturbed or melancholy mind.

Hammond ſoon after going into Wales with Mr. Ormiſtace and Mrs. Herbert, an interval of ſix weeks paſſed before he again ſaw Agatha. But the apparant tranquillity which ſhe had obſerved with ſo much pleaſure when they laſt met, was now fled—the change was too ſtriking to eſcape her notice for a moment. His countenance was dejected; and when he attempted to ſmile, his gaiety was evidently forced.

"Nothing, I hope," ſaid Agatha, with a voice of tender ſolicitude, "nothing has "arrived to diſtreſs my dear friend?"

"Why ſhould you imagine it?" replied Hammond confuſedly.

"Your countenance, Hammond, ſpeaks "it but too plainly—I could not look at "that without aſking what had diſtreſſed "you. It is the ſacred province of friend-"ſhip to ſhare our ſorrows as well as bleſſ-"ings. Tell me then what has happened. "Are you unhappy?"

"I ought to be otherwiſe, my Agatha, "for I have juſt enjoyed the tranſport of "conferring bliſs on others. St. Valorie's "charming daughter is beloved by the ſon "of a neighbouring farmer, a man of opu-"lence and worth. On my giving her a "few hundred pounds as a portion, the "young man's father made no objection to "the match; and I left them the happieſt "of beings.

"May ſuch happineſs be yours my Ham-"mond! and may I, may your happy "Agatha witneſs, and by witneſſing ſhare "it!"

Hammond turned from her to conceal his agitation.

"Have you ever, my deareſt friend, have

"you

"you ever, purſued Agatha with ſweet-
"neſs, reflected on what I once urged to
"you?—Have you, indeed, ſeen a woman
"who could make your life happy?"

Hammond was ſilent.

"Speak Hammond, ſpeak I conjure
"you. Open your whole heart to me, to
"your friend—the friend who looks up to
"you for all *her* happineſs."

"Surely," ſaid Hammond with fervour,
"thou art an Angel and no woman."

"Not yet," ſaid Agatha, ſweetly ſmiling through the tears that gliſtened in her eyes,
"but the time will come when I truſt I
"ſhall be one, and looking down on you
"from the ſeats of ever-during bliſs, ſhall
"behold you with pious ſteps treading the
"path that leads you to me—a huſband—
"parent—while all the ſacred duties of
"domeſtic life ſhall be your bleſſings
"here."

Agatha pauſed; but Hammond, too much affected for utterance, did not even attempt to reply.

"Speak

"Speak then, my Hammond," reſumed Agatha, "is there a woman whom you "could, whom you do love, her only, who "is dead to you and all the world, out "of the queſtion?——ſpeak——fear not "to repoſe every thought on me——is "there?"

"My Agatha, had I never, perhaps, "ſeen you———"

"You ſhall ſuppoſe you have not ſeen "me; or if you have, muſt remember that "I am no more; for, when I took my "vows, I myſtically renounced life itſelf. "Tell me then whom, (your Agatha al-"ways out of the queſtion) whom could "you perfectly eſteem—love?——"

"If there is another, whoſe virtues claim "my perfect admiration, whoſe ſociety I "ſhould relinquiſh with pain, whoſe ſenſi-"bility and ſweetneſs ſeem the counter-"parts of yours, it is ————." He he-ſitated.

"Mrs. Herbert——" ſaid Agatha.

Hammond covered his face with his hands,

hands, in ſilent through extreme agitation.

"May bleſſings, innumerable bleſſings "be your portion, my Hammond!" ſaid ſaid Agatha, claſping her hands together with fervour, and raiſing her eyes to Heaven; "may no cares diſturb, no ſorrow "embitter your moments,

"Till evening comes at laſt, ſerene and mild,
"When after the long vernal day of life
"Together freed your gentle ſpirits fly."

Unable to bear a longer continuance of this affecting ſcene, ſhe took Hammond's hand, and preſſing it to her lips, uttered a ſcarcely articulate bleſſing, and left him.

Going into the library, ſhe threw herſelf into a chair, where the cares of Siſter Agnes with difficulty preſerved her from fainting. When ſhe was able to ſpeak, ſhe conjured Siſter Agnes to go to Hammond; "but tell him not," continued Agatha, "if you value my peace, that you ſaw me

"thus

"thus agitated. Soothe him, comfort him "——ſay I am returning to him——tell "him any thing but that I am unhap-"py."

"But I cannot, dare not leave you thus," replied Siſter Agnes.

"Yes, go," I charge you——I want no-"thing——I am better——Call Martha "then, but go to him."

Siſter Agnes, though extremely unwilling to leave her, now called the ſervant, and went herſelf to Hammond.

She found him walking up and down the room, apparently ſtruggling with his emotions.

"My dear friend has ſent me to you," ſaid Siſter Agnes.

"And how is ſhe?" ſaid Hammond, ſtarting, and ſeeming to awake as from a dream.

Siſter Agnes knew not how to reply. At laſt, after ſome heſitation, ſhe anſwered, that ſhe was a good deal better.

"Better!——was ſhe ill then?——— "Good God!"

"No,

"No, but agitated a good deal—rather——"

"O Agnes! I would die rather than give "her pain—tell her ſo; and conjure her "never more to give a thought on the ſub-"ject. Conjure her to make her own "mind eaſy. Bid her be happy; for 'tis "that alone can render me ſo."

Hammond now took his hat, and went out of the houſe. Siſter Agnes immediately returned to Agatha, and found her greatly better than when ſhe left her: ſhe was talking to the ſervant with much aſſumed compoſure, and was giving directions for a medicine ſhe had bid her prepare for a ſick child. She deſired the ſervant to leave them, and after aſſuring Siſter Agnes that ſhe was infinitely better, entreated her to diſpenſe with her repeating the cauſe of her agitation for the preſent. "A few hours "ſpent in reflection," ſaid Agatha, "will "I doubt not, enable me to relate every "thing that has paſſed without renewing "my ſufferings. I have long laboured to

"conquer

"conquer myſelf; but mine is a ſtubborn "heart, and harder to be ſubdued than I "once imagined."

In about an hour, ſhe went to her Piano Forte, and opening a volume of Handel's ſongs, accidentally turned to that delightful one in Jeptha,

"Farewell thou buſy world, where reign
"Short hours of joy, and years of pain:
"Brighter ſcenes I ſeek above,
"In the realms of peace and love."

Though her voice faltered frequently, ſhe ſung it with an enthuſiaſm which ſeemed to raiſe her above the world; and getting up from the inſtrument, "Yes, my Agnes," ſhe exclaimed, "what is this gew-gaw life, "what the periſhable pleaſures of a few "ſhort years, that we ſhould thus "diſ-"quiet ourſelves in vain," thus "graſp at "a vain ſhadow," when there are bleſſings "in ſtore for us hereafter, one hour inſtead "of an eternity of which would be an am-"ple recompenſe for every trial?"

In

In the evening, Agatha was ſufficiently collected to relate to her ſympathizing friend the ſubſtance of her converſation with Hammond. Siſter Agnes heard her with equal grief and aſtoniſhment, and repeating to her all that Hammond had ſaid on his departure, conjured her to drop for ever all ideas of a project, by which ſhe would wound Hammond in the tendereſt part—— in *her* comfort.

"Except during ſome painful moments, "when the feelings of my heart ſtrive to "maſter my reaſon," replied Agatha, "I "do, indeed, contemplate the idea of his "marriage with pleaſure. I love to build "airy caſtles for his happineſs. I love to "imagine him poſſeſſed of all the felicity "this world can beſtow. And then, to "enjoy the exulting thought, that to me, "to my ſolicitude to ſee him bleſt he ſhall "owe them; to think that my momenta-"ry anguiſh, the victory obtained over my "rebellious heart, has given him theſe "bleſſings! O Agnes! ſhall I not be re-"warded, even here?"

"But

"But my dear ſiſter, can you imagine "that Mrs. Herbert, your dear, your bo-"ſom friend, who loves you as I do, can "marry Hammond, even though ſhe lov-"ed him?

"If I can perſuade her that it will make "*me* happy——"

"O Conſtance! but Mrs. Herbert *has* "penetration——the tear of anguiſh can-"not be concealed from her; ſhe would "diſcern your ſorrow however thick the "veil you caſt over it?"

"But when I uſe no deceit, when I real-"ly feel what I profeſs?"

"It is not poſſible. Think you I could "have borne that Dorville——"

"Our ſituations are totally different. In "you, love was a duty; in me, it is a "crime. Beſides, the firſt leſſon I was "taught was to command myſelf; and "born with feelings too acute it has been a "ſevere one: but how have I triumphed "when the victory has been at laſt obtain-"ed! My deareſt Agnes, the approbation

"of

"of our own heart is a jewel of ineſtima-
"ble value, a jewel that cannot be too
"dearly bought."

Agatha, conſcious that ſhe could write with a calmneſs which ſhe ſhould in vain endeavour to aſſume in converſation, wrote to Hammond to repeat her arguments. After dwelling on what ſhe had formerly urged, "I will not," ſhe continued, "deceive you "by ſaying, that I have felt no pain, have "endured no ſtruggles, before I brought "my mind to conſent to, and even to wiſh "your union with another; but, if I know "my own heart, they are now at an end; "and I contemplate the idea with the fond "anxiety of a parent who looks forward to "an event from which ſhe expects the feli-"city of the child of her hopes."

Agatha received theſe lines in reply.

"Can I, dare I believe you, my Aga-"tha?——I know the nobleneſs of your "mind, I know it would ſpurn a falſe-"hood——but do you not deceive your-"ſelf?——Think not that I can be happy

"if

"if you are otherwiſe——Yet why do I "ſay this? you know me, and know it is "impoſſible; if it were not, ſhould I de- "ſerve or poſſeſs the friendſhip of a mind "elevated as yours?——Your perſuaſive "eloquence drew from me a confeſſion no "one elſe ſhould have extorted from me.

"O! examine your own heart, my Aga- "tha; and do not bid it make a ſacrifice, "which, if ſuch, would ruin my peace "for ever. Yet no——think of it no more. "The dread that a ſecret grief might ran- "kle in your heart would prove a canker- "worm to mine, and convert my promiſed "bleſſings into torture."

Agatha wrote in anſwer.

"I know my own heart, Hammond, "and neither deceive you nor myſelf. I "know I am preparing a triumph for my- "ſelf, and I cannot relinquiſh the idea. "May bleſſings be yours and Emma's por- "tion, and they muſt be that of your "Agatha."

She diſpatched, at the ſame time, a meſ-

ſenger

ſenger to Mrs. Herbert with the following lines.

'My Beloved Friend,

'LET me ſee you to morrow. I 'have much to ſay to you——Hammond 'more than eſteems—he loves you—I have 'drawn the dear confeſſion from him. His 'heart is a treaſure, Emma—ſurely you will 'not prize it the leſs for having been *once* 'in the poſſeſſion of your friend?—You are 'not inſenſible of Hammond's merit—re-'ward it, therefore, I conjure you, and you 'will make me happy—happier than I dar-'ed hope to have been in *this* world.'

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

THE next morning Mrs. Herbert and Hammond arrived nearly at the ſame minute. In compliance with Agatha's ſolicitations, they conſented to paſs the day with her, though embarraſſment and uneaſineſs were evident in the countenances of both. Siſter Agnes, trembling for her friend, and conſidering her preſent fortitude as the reſult of an effort too painful to be long ſuſtained, betrayed continual apprehenſion and anxiety. Agatha, her mind elevated by the heroiſm of her virtue, was alone firm, collected, and ſerene. She endeavoured to diſſipate the uneaſineſs of her friends. She ſtarted new ſubjects repeatedly; each of which was only ſupported by her own animated and pointed remarks. Mrs. Herbert's wonted vivacity was fled. If ſhe caught Agatha's eye, her own filled with

with tears, and ſhe was obliged to turn from her to conceal her emotions. Hammond was ſometimes abſent and thoughtful; at others, he watched every turn of Agatha's countenance with trembling anxiety, endeavouring, as it ſeemed, to trace if her ſerenity were real or aſſumed.

As evening advanced, the embarraſſment of Hammond and Mrs. Herbert by degrees wore off; Agatha had not once, even by a hint, reverted to the ſubject on which ſhe had written to them, and they began to hope ſhe did not intend it. Mrs. Herbert's carriage arriving, ſhe roſe inſtantly to obey the ſummons, and Hammond, at the ſame moment, was preparing to depart, when Agatha caught hold of his arm, and addreſſing herſelf to him and Mrs. Herbert, "before you "go," ſhe ſaid, "there is a queſtion I wiſh "to put to you both concerning the bro-"ther of one of my ſervants; and as there "are various opinions on the caſe I wiſh to "hear yours before I decide either way. A "fortune conſiderable to perſons in his ſta-

"tion of life has been left to Martha's "youngeſt brother by a diſtant relation. "With this he propoſes to purchaſe a little "eſtate, and to reſide upon it with his wife "and family during the remainder of his "life. But his elder brother, not having had "equal good luck, is not of courſe able to "purchaſe a farm; and the mother, whoſe "darling he is, cannot bear that one ſon "ſhould buy an eſtate, and become a ſquire, "as ſhe calls it, while the other continues "to labour for his ſupport. The young "man himſelf is, notwithſtanding, deſirous "that his brother ſhould employ his little "wealth to the beſt poſſible advantage; "and he is certainly right: do you not "think ſo? Would he not be highly con-"demnable, ſhould he, in compliance with "his mother's narrow wiſhes, endeavour to "impede his brother's advancement?"

"Certainly," replied Hammond; "there "is not a doubt in the caſe."

"Ought we not," purſued Agatha, "to "exult in another's enjoying a bleſſing

"though

"though it may be out of our reach? is it "not natural to every generous mind? Do "you not think ſo, Emma?"

Mrs. Herbert turned pale.

"My beloved friend's countenance tells "me ſhe penetrates the reference I would "make," ſaid Agatha. Then taking Mrs. Herbert's hand, "Here, Hammond," ſhe ſaid, "firſt, and beſt-beloved of my heart, "receive from me the deareſt treaſure in "the world——the hand of the moſt eſti-"mable of women: her heart I am ſure "does not, and her lips muſt not, ſhall not "contradict my wiſhes."

Hammond was motionleſs with aſtoniſh-ment.

"Muſt I take yours too?" ſaid Agatha to Hammond with an animated ſmile; "here then, my Emma, I join them—your "Agatha, your happy Agatha unites the two "beings deareſt to her in the world. May "every bleſſing be yours; and many, many "years may Heaven ſpare me to witneſs "them!—"

"I cannot bear this," ſaid Hammond, forcing himſelf from Agatha, and throwing himſelf into a chair.

Mrs. Herbert, too much affected to ſhed a tear, and incapable of utterance, was only preſerved from fainting by the ſalts Siſter Agnes held to her.

Agatha went firſt to one, then to the other of her friends, ſoothing each in their turn, while her own feelings ſeemed entirely obliterated and loſt in theirs.

When Mrs. Herbert was ſomewhat recovered, "I will aſk you, my dear friend," ſaid Agatha, "one queſtion, to which, by "all the friendſhip that ever ſubſiſted be- "tween us, I conjure you to anſwer me ſin- "cerely. Were I wholly out of the queſ- "tion, had there never exiſted ſuch a be- "ing, or had we never met, would you, "knowing Hammond's worth as you do, "have rejected his propoſals? Speak, Em- "ma, and anſwer me ſincerely. I may "have been abrupt. The warmth of my "feelings, my ardent wiſh to promote his "happineſs

"happineſs may have prompted me to give "your hand where your whole heart could "not be given, though of your perfect eſ- "teem for him, *as a friend*, I have long "been convinced. As you wiſh to preſerve "my friendſhip, as you value my peace, I "charge you anſwer me from your heart. "Would you, I repeat it, have rejected "him?"

"I know not," replied Mrs. Herbert, at laſt relieved by tears, "nor can I ſay, how, "in different circumſtances, I might have "acted, or wiſhed to act: but in the pre- "ſent, conſidering our friend as the plight- "ed huſband of another, (however fatally "divided) that other the friend of my bo- "ſom—"

"Enough, my deareſt Emma," inter- rupted Agatha; "that doubt ſatisfies me, "and ought to do Hammond. Had I "been a man, I ſhould have made an ad- "mirable wooer, for I have penetration "enough to ſpare her I loved the pain of a "*direct* confeſſion. Be not pained by my "vivacity, for indeed and indeed, it is

"not feigned. I have juſt accompliſh-
"ed the darling wiſh of my heart, and
"ought I not to feel gay and happy? My
"trial is now at an end—I have nothing
"but comforts before me: a proſpect il-
"lumined by the future happineſs of you
"—of you—and of you, my Agnes; for
"will you not ſhare *my* felicity? will not
"you too exult when they are bleſt?"

Siſter Agnes, who dreaded a continuance of this ſcene, and whom Agatha's vivacity, however natural it appeared, but alarmed the more, now with tears entreated her, for the ſake of her friends, if not for her own, to drop this affecting ſubject.

"Yes; now, and for ever, my ſweet
"Agatha," ſaid Mrs. Herbert.

A ſervant, at that inſtant, came to inform Mrs. Herbert that her carriage had been waiting ſome time.

"Not yet," ſaid Agatha, as Mrs. Her-
bert offered to go, "I cannot part with
"you thus. Will you then force me to
"repeat my ſolicitations? Muſt I again
"take this dear reluctant hand?—Ham-
"mond—

"mond—muſt I once more *aſk* you to ac-
"cept it?"

"O!" ſaid Hammond, taking Mrs. Herbert's hand, "with what gratitude "ſhould I receive it, did I not fear your "own generous heart——No, Agatha, I "repeat it—it is impoſſible."

"Hammond, I ſcorn deceit—I am what "I appear, feel what I profeſs to feel. My "mind, long rivetted to this idea, cannot "relinquiſh it. But promiſe me—both "promiſe me that you will, at leaſt, reflect "on what I have urged."

"I will," ſaid Hammond, ſighing deeply.

"And you, Emma."

"I do—I will, thou Angel of a woman!"

Hammond and Mrs. Herbert now took leave of Agatha, Hammond, at Agatha's requeſt, attending Mrs. Herbert home, as her ſpirits appeared too much agitated to be ſuffered to depart alone.

Siſter Agnes, who wiſhed yet dreaded their departure, and who expected every

moment to ſee Agatha fall a prey to her exertions, watched her countenance with fearful anxiety; but ſhe ſaw, with equal aſtoniſhment and ſatisfaction, that her ſpirits remained unaltered. She converſed with eaſe on different topics, and though a few minutes of abſence ſometimes intervened, ſhe did not appear to ſtruggle with any inward diſtreſs.

At night, however, ſhe was unable to ſleep; and in the morning was not entirely free from fever. Obſerving the alarm impreſſed on the countenance of Siſter Agnes, ſhe conjured her to calm her apprehenſions: "It has been ever thus," ſhe ſaid; "the "weakneſs of my frame was always incapa- "ble of ſupporting the exertions my ſitua- "tion required. But believe me when I "aſſure you, that I am internally happy. "My mind feels relieved from a weight "that has long oppreſſed it."

Agatha, as ſhe converſed with Siſter Agnes, grew inſenſibly more and more tranquil, and before the evening, was perfectly recovered;

recovered; when a meſſenger coming from Mrs. Herbert and Hammond to enquire after her health, ſhe was well enough to ſend them a written reply, aſſuring them of the tranquility of her mind, and, in the moſt forcible manner, renewing her former entreaties.

The next day ſhe neither ſaw nor heard from them, but on the day following ſhe was ſurprized by a viſit from Mr. Ormiſtace and Mr. Crawford.

"I come, my charming Miſs Belmont," ſaid Mr. Ormiſtace, "on a moſt extraor-"dinary errand. Is it poſſible—tell me—" "do you deſire that Hammond ſhall marry "Emma? you, who I always believed at-"tached to him from your very ſoul!"

"It is, indeed, true," ſaid Agatha, ſomewhat agitated by the abruptneſs of the addreſs, yet almoſt inſtantly recovering her compoſure! "I wiſh the happineſs of "Hammond and Mrs. Herbert, and there-"fore would——"

"Torture yourſelf! put your own feel-

"ings on the rack!" interrupted Mr. Ormiſtace. "But no, Miſs Belmont, angelic "creature! no, it ſhall never be. If Em- "ma dare to think of him, if Hammond "dare indulge a hope—"

"Be calm, my good friend," ſaid Mr. Crawford, obſerving Agatha terrified by his warmth and menaces; "We come to "conſult with this excellent young lady, "to learn her real ſentiments and feelings, "and to convince her that the happineſs of "her friends cannot be purchaſed by her "ſufferings. Speak then, my dear Miſs Bel- "mont; you know the excellence of Mrs. "Herbert's heart, and muſt be aſſured it "cannot have built its felicity on aught "that could ſhake or injure yours. Does "not your heart give the lie to your "tongue? or rather, does not your mag- "nanimity lead you to deceive yourſelf?— "Can you ſee, not merely without pain, "but with pleaſure, Mr. Hammond mar- "ried to another?"

"Impoſſible!" ſaid Mr. Ormiſtace; "Good

"Good God! Sir, ſhe cannot. Can ſhe "endure to ſee the man ſhe once loved "(and if *once always*, with a heart like "hers) laviſh upon another that tenderneſs, "thoſe attentions, which, but for the curſt "ſuperſtition of her parents had been hers? "It cannot, ſhall not be! ſhe ſhall not, if "ſhe would, make herſelf miſerable."

"Be calm, my dear Mr. Ormiſtace, I "entreat you," ſaid Agatha, "and ſuffer "me to ſpeak. What feelings are thoſe "which muſt induce me to oppoſe Mr. "Hammond's marriage, if I did oppoſe "it?——Jealouſy of his ſuperior regard "for another, and envy of that other's hap-"pineſs. And do you imagine me capa-"ble of paſſions ſo odious? or, if they had "found a place in my breaſt, think you I "would harbour and indulge them?—Be-"ſides, is it the duty of any one to forego a "benefit becauſe it is out of the reach of "another?"

"But where the heart is concerned, my "deareſt lady," ſaid Mr. Crawford, "the caſe

" is widely different. We might not per-
" haps hold it condemnable to buy a tene-
" ment which our neighbour had not ready
" money to purchaſe, but we could not
" bear, becauſe adverſe circumſtances have
" put it out of the power of our friend to
" marry, to unite ourſelves to the object of
" his affections: this would be to wound
" him where *all* are vulnerable."

" Not if that friend were dead, Mr.
" Crawford," ſaid Agatha; " and by the
" ceremony which took place at my pro-
" feſſion, I am literally dead to the world."

" Curſt, curſt ſuperſtition!" ſaid Mr. Ormiſtace.

" It is, indeed, aſtoniſhing," ſaid Mr. Crawford, " that rational beings ſhould
" ever have imagined, that to exclude them-
" ſelves from the duties as well as the bleſſ-
" ings of ſocial life while in this world,
" would be the only method of enſuring
" ſalvation in the next. But it is a queſ-
" tion we do not now come to diſcuſs.
" You, my ſweet young lady, have been a

" victim

"victim immolated at this barbarous ſhrine;
"and that you have, has coſt many and
"many a tear to thoſe who had ſeen you,
"and knew your virtues. But will you
"ſuffer me, once more, to repeat my queſ-
"tion?—Can you aſſure us that your for-
"mer attachment to Mr. Hammond is ſo
"entirely ſubdued, that your heart actually
"wiſhes what your lips have declared?"

"Indeed, indeed, it does," replied Aga-
tha with firmneſs. "To Mr. Hammond
"I, perhaps, owe the preſervation of my
"life: he did not heſitate to riſk his own
"for me; and to ſee him rewarded as he
"deſerves is the ultimate wiſh of my heart.
"Mrs. Herbert has every virtue that can
"adorn her ſex; ſhe does not, I am con-
"vinced, regard him with indifference;
"they muſt be happy, and I ſhall ſhare
"every bleſſing that is reſerved for them."

"Good God!" ſaid Mr. Ormiſtace,
"you almoſt perſuade me out of my rea-
"ſon."

"I would rather ſeek to convince it,"
ſaid

ſaid Agatha. "Be aſſured that what I urge "is not the impulſe of a haſty moment; "it is the reſult of calm and deliberate re- "flection, ſeconded by an idea, perhaps the "offſpring of ſuperſtition, that I ſhall not "long be an inhabitant of this world; and "I would fain ſee Hammond happy before "I die—would leave him ſome miniſter- "ing friend to make his future days ſerene "and bleſt.—Do you then, my dear Mr. "Ormiſtace, and you, Mr. Crawford, my "other valued friend," purſued Agatha, of- fering a hand to each, "by your endeavours, "reconcile Mrs. Herbert as well as Ham- "mond to a lot that will, I am aſſured, "make them happy; and which their ge- "nerous fears for me can alone induce "them to reject. Paint me to them, ſuch "as you have ſeen me, ſuch as I am,— "tranquil and happy; with no cloud over- "ſhadowing the dear view before me— "every tint in the delightful picture har- "monized by the contemplation of their "bleſſings."

"Wonder-

"Wonderful woman!" cried Mr. Ormiſtace, the tears in his eyes, "every word "you utter encreaſes my aſtoniſhment. "Where could you have learned this? or "are you really a being of a higher or-"der?"

"From my cradle," replied Agatha, "I "have been taught to regulate my feelings; "it was the firſt leſſon my mother, the firſt, "Miſs Hammond inculcated: and from "nature I learned, in common with you, "and every other whoſe heart is not igno-"ble, that the happineſs of others is our "own."

"Heaven will in future reward you as "you deſerve," ſaid Mr. Crawford; "no "bleſſings this world has to beſtow can do "it."

After ſome converſation on other ſubjects, in which Agatha took a part with every appearance of eaſe and tranquility, Mr. Crawford and Mr. Ormiſtace took their leave, promiſing, in purſuance of Agatha's earneſt entreaties, to promote a

marriage

marriage which they now believed would be no leſs conducive to her happineſs than to that of her friends.

Some months, however, paſſed, before Hammond and Mrs. Herbert, ſtill doubtful of Agatha's real feelings, could be prevailed upon to yield to her entreaties. At length, convinced by her repeated aſſurances, that, far from diſtreſſing, it would in the end reſtore tranquility to her mind, and that, from her generous deſire to promote their happineſs, it was become the firſt and darling wiſh of her heart, they yielded to her reiterated perſuaſions, and were married on the firſt of March 1792.

When the appointed day came, Siſter Agnes, who had long dreaded its arrival, in ſpite of the fortitude Agatha had hitherto invariably diſplayed, watched every turn of her countenance with the tendereſt ſolicitude, and in her apprehenſions for her beloved friend was herſelf in need of the conſolation ſhe wiſhed to beſtow. Agatha preſſed her to her boſom—aſſured her that her fears were groundleſs—that ſhe felt not only

tranquil

tranquil but happy. Yet when ſhe eſſayed to employ herſelf as uſual, ſhe was incapable of fixing her attention. She opened a book, but ſhut it again, unable to read. A little ſtuff gown which ſhe was making for a poor child, lay on the table. She took it up with intent to finiſh it, but the needle dropped from her fingers. When the clock ſtruck twelve, ſhe ſtarted from her ſeat, turned pale, and went out of the room. Siſter Agnes, alarmed at her appearance and manner, followed her immediately. Agatha conjured her to ſuffer her to paſs a few minutes alone. "It is now paſt," ſhe ſaid; "the awful ceremony is over, and "propitious be the event. I wiſh but on "my knees to implore a bleſſing for them, "and will return to you here."

Siſter Agnes conſented to leave her, though with reluctance; but alarmed at her not returning ſo ſoon as ſhe had promiſed, ſhe went to her room, and found her apparently lifeleſs on the floor, a paper lying near her, written, as it appeared, for the trying occaſion.

Siſter

Siſter Agnes, in a terror that almoſt deprived her of reaſon, ſcreamed, and rang the bell for the ſervants; and by their efforts and aſſiſtance Agatha was at laſt recovered.

When Agatha had perfectly regained her ſenſes, and the ſervants had left the room, ſhe aſſured Siſter Agnes that ſhe was unable to account for the ſudden privation of ſenſe which had ſeized her. "Preparatory to "this dear, though awful day," continued Agatha, "I had written ſome lines to in-"voke bleſſings on thoſe I love, and, at "the ſame time, to inſpire me with forti-"tude and reſignation, ſhould my rebel "heart refuſe to rejoice when its day of "trial came. I wiſhed to read them when "the hour of twelve was paſt, and they "were indiſſolubly united, nor was I aware "that I felt any violent emotions. I read, "as I thought, with compoſure; but when "I came to the words, "his wife," my "heart turned cold—a faint ſickneſs ſeized "me, and I loſt my recollection. Be not

"alarmed

"alarmed for me, my beloved friend—it "is over now. There lies the paper. "Read it, my Agnes, but not to me—I "am tranquil at preſent, and will not again "agitate my ſpirits."

Siſter Agnes took the paper; but fearing that her ſympathizing emotions might renew thoſe of Agatha, promiſed to read it at a future opportunity. The following is a copy of the contents.

Lines to be read on the deareſt yet moſt awful of days, at the hour of twelve.

Many and various are the ſorrows of life. Some are fated to lament the loſs of friends; ſome to ſtruggle with the evils of penury and want; others to feel their boſoms rent by the ſacrifices Virtue exacts: but thy bleſſing, O! Father of Mercies! is ſtill left to ſuſtain them; an Haven of Peace Eternally open to All who ſeek and deſerve to enter it!

Early

Early did I become a Child of Affliction. Steep and rugged was the path given me to aſcend; while Pleaſure, under her faireſt image, tempted me back; and pointing to the flower-ſtrewn paths of domeſtic life, bid me love, and be happy. But I turned from the ſweet illuſion, obeyed the monitreſs within me, was guiltleſs, and was happy—Thy bleſſing ſuſtained me! O! withhold it not now.

Shower down bleſſings on Hammond and the Wife of his heart. Many and happy be the days of the years of their pilgrimage on earth; and if it be thy will, preſerve me to witneſs and encreaſe their felicity.

The ſoothing tenderneſs of Siſter Agnes with Agatha's own heroic efforts very ſoon reſtored her former ſerenity; and ſhe awaited with anxious impatience the day of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's return from London,

" whither

whither they had gone immediately on their marriage.

On the day of their return, Agatha, accompanied by Siſter Agnes, haſtened to welcome their arrival; and deſirous that even her dreſs ſhould beſpeak her a ſharer in their felicity, ſhe laid aſide her religious habit for that day, and wore a dreſs of muſlin with coloured ornaments.

As ſhe approached Hammond's houſe, the idea of the different ſenſations with which ſhe had once before entered and quitted it, ſtruck her forcibly. She had then been received under its roof in the days of youthful delight, when no cares had corroded, no trials tortured her heart: it was the abode of friendſhip, peace, and pleaſure. She left it, deprived for ever of that friend, her heart yet bleeding for her loſs, and, though unconſcious of its feelings, too tenderly attached to another. That other ſhe was now preparing to meet —to meet him, the huſband of her deareſt friend—married in purſuance of her wiſhes, her prayers.

Loſt

Loſt in reflection the chaiſe had ſtopped at the gate, before ſhe was aware they were near the houſe. Hammond met her at the door; "My Agatha, this is kind, indeed," ſaid Hammond noticing her dreſs, and immediately comprehending the delicate compliment.

"Nothing, my beſt friend," ſaid Agatha, "ought on this dear occaſion to wear "the face of gloom. Where is my Emma, "now, my dear Mrs.——" Hammond, ſhe would have ſaid, but her voice faltered. Recovering herſelf immediately, however, "ſurely," ſhe continued, "ſhe is well?— "Her impatience to ſee me cannot be leſs "than mine to meet her."

At that minute Mrs. Hammond, who had been endeavouring to aſſume courage to ſupport the trying ſcene, ran into Agatha's arms, and letting her head fall on her boſom, gave way to a ſhower of tears.

"Let me kiſs off theſe tears of "friendſhip, my Emma," ſaid Agatha with exquiſite tenderneſs, "and endea-

" your to calm theſe dear agitated ſpirits. " Hammond aſſiſt me to recover *our* Em- " ma."

" Angelic Agatha!" ſaid Hammond, raiſing his eyes to Heaven, his voice falter- ing with the emotions he felt. Then turn- ing to Mrs. Hammond, and taking her hand. " Look up, my love," he ſaid, " look up and witneſs the kindneſs of this " beſt of friends—this angel—to whom we " owe the life of felicity we enjoy."

" Forgive me, my ſweet Agatha," ſaid Mrs. Hammond, " that I cannot utter " what my heart dictates; to your own I ap- " peal—that only can tell you what I feel."

" Happy—happy may you ever be, my " beloved Emma," ſaid Agatha, with fer- vour, " happy as you deſerve—as I wiſh " you.—We could, I know, dwell for ever " on the dear theme of our friendſhip—but " it is too affecting to us all—my Agnes " cannot bear it—we will quit this deareſt " ſubject then, but every other muſt be " intereſting to friends thus attached to " each other."

Several

Several months now glided on in uninterrupted tranquility. Agatha, her trials over, participating all the bleſſings of her friends, and they with tranſport acknowledging that to her they owed them. —Few days paſſed in which they did not meet; and occaſionally joined by St Valorie, whoſe amiable daughter had been ſome time married and enjoyed every proſpect of continued happineſs; ſometimes by Mr. Crawford and his family, and very frequently by Mr. Ormiſtace, Agatha but for her apprehenſions on account of her parents, would have believed her happineſs perfect; at leaſt as much ſo as there is reaſon to expect in a world where virtue is appointed to *earn* not to *receive* its reward.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

IN little more than a year, Mrs. Hammond completed the felicity of her huſband as well as of Agatha, by preſenting to them twins—a lovely boy and girl.—In theſe ſweet infants Agatha ſeemed herſelf a mother. A thouſand tender emotions before unknown to her now filled her heart. The value of her own life ſeemed enhanced; ſince with the exquiſite feelings of a parent, ſhe was anxious to preſerve it for their ſake; to witneſs their growth, their improvement; to trace the progreſs of their virtues, and aſſiſt in the delightful taſk of their culture.

As Agatha was one day contemplating the infant Emma as it lay aſleep on her lap, a ſervant entered and informed her, that an old gentleman very remarkably dreſſed had aſked to ſpeak to his maſter, or if he was not at home to any of his friends. Aga-

tha deſired the ſervant to ſhew him into the parlour; but how great was her aſtoniſhment and pleaſure, when, in the face of the old gentleman ſhe inſtantly recognized that of the good and venerable Father Albert. Giving the infant to its nurſe, ſhe flew to meet him while ſurprize and joy for ſome moments deprived her of ſpeech.

"My dear daughter," ſaid Father Albert, when the firſt emotions of delight were over, "I then ſee you happy; united "to the man you loved—a wife and a mother. "Imagine not that I am preparing to re-"proach you; God forbid!—your trial was "a hard one; harder, perhaps, than human "nature *could* ſuſtain. But why this dreſs, "when ſharing the pleaſures of the world?"

"No, my dear father," replied Agatha, "Heaven has given me courage to reſiſt eve-"ry temptation to violate my vows. That "ſweet infant, though mine in affection, has "another mother."

"Amazement!" ſaid Father Albert—but "Hammond, my other adopted child—"

"He

"He is married at my earneſt ſolicitations;
"and from his happineſs and that of his
"eſtimable wife, I enjoy bleſſings that could
"not have been mine, had the ſting of
"ſelf-reproach once wounded my boſom.—
"But how did you eſcape, my dear father?
"Satisfy my impatience. We feared—we
"lamented you as dead."

"My preſervation was, indeed, won-
"derful," ſaid Father Albert, "ſince my
"life was twice in imminent danger. My
"frequent viſits to different towns to pur-
"chaſe proviſions, had, as I imagine, been
"noticed; and on my return from one
"of them my ſteps were traced, I was pur-
"ſued and ſeized at ſome diſtance from the
"cave. They believed me poſſeſſed of ſome
"hidden treaſure, and on condition that I
"would lead them to the ſpot, and aſſiſt
"them in exploring every part of the re-
"ceſs I inhabited, they promiſed to pardon,
"and poſſibly to ſet me at liberty. If, on the
"other hand, I refuſed to obey them, my

"life was to pay the forfeiture of my obsti-
"nacy."

"Just Heaven!" said Agatha "and to preserve us——"

"They would not," replied Father Albert, "if their purposed treatment of me "can be judged by that others have received, "have performed their promise, though pos-"sibly they might not have ordered me to "execution. I was taken to prison, and the "gaoler received orders to put me to death "during the night. But his wife, to whom, "as she had lost her parents in her infancy, "I had been a father and protector, prevailed "upon him to suffer me to escape. Assured "that I could confide in her fidelity, I in-"formed her of your situation, and by my di-"rections she went to the cave, being provi-"ded with a tale in case she had been disco-"vered, but when I saw her afterwards, I learn-"ed that you and Hammond had escaped be-"fore she arrived to apprize you of your dan-"ger.—Once more at liberty, I attempted to "conceal myself from my persecutors, and

"became again an inhabitant of the foreſt;
"till at laſt, compelled by hunger, I was ne-
"ceſſitated to implore relief at the houſe of
"a peaſant whom I believed a ſtranger
"to my perſon. He received me with pre-
"tended compaſſion; but while, by his or-
"ders, his wife prepared me an omlet, he
"went out of the houſe, and returned with
"a party of his neighbours to ſeize and
"conduct me to priſon. Happily my per-
"ſon was not identified, but I was a prieſt,
"and that was a ſufficient crime. I was
"conveyed to a priſon ſome miles diſtant,
"and there the horrors I witneſſed would
"exceed belief, were there not too, too ma-
"ny dreadful proofs of the reality of ſuch
"ſcenes in my devoted country. The room
"in which I was confined had a ſmall
"grated window that looked into a ſquare
"ſtone court, in the centre of the build-
"ing. Thither the priſoners were brought
"to be examined or maſſacred. At
"dead of night, I have heard the cells
"opened, the victims dragged to the

"court, and without the formality of a "trial, or even a pretence of juſtice, there "murdered: their dying groans yet re-"ſound in my ears. Fear ſealed the lips of "their relations and friends: an enquiry af-"ter thoſe who were impriſoned proved "thoſe who dared to make it, acceſſary to "the PLOTS againſt LIBERTY, and involved "them in the ſame puniſhment.——The "nurſe and infant ſon of the Marquis de "Villarme were brought to the priſon in "which I was confined. The nurſe was "believed to have ſecreted ſome of her "maſter's treaſures, the infant was the ſon "of a Noble! The woman, after number-"leſs interrogatories, was, at laſt, diſmiſſed; "the child died in priſon. Two nights "after this, a fire broke out in ſome part "of the building, and in the general tu-"mult I happily eſcaped. Determined no "longer to attempt to remain in France, "I ventured during the night to apply to "the good girl who had before favoured "my eſcape from priſon, and received

from

"from her a ſmall ſupply of food. With "this aſſiſtance, with what I occaſionally "received from ſome benevolent Lyon-"noiſe, I reached Switzerland, where an "Engliſh gentleman took me under his "protection, and brought me with him to "England. Learning that Mr. Hammond "had likewiſe eſcaped to England, I en-"quired his abode; and, long accuſtomed "to this mode of travelling, have come hi-"ther on foot."

Father Albert had juſt finiſhed his recital, when Hammond entered, and after expreſſing his delight at meeting the venerable father, entreated him to ſuffer him to return part of his obligations; and as he had been his gueſt in France, to conſent to become his in England; and not merely a temporary but a conſtant one. Mrs. Hammond, who now entered the room, and to whom Hammond preſented Father Albert as the preſerver of his own and Agatha's life, joined her entreaties to his, while the good prieſt received their offers with tears of gratitude.

Agatha afterwards inſiſted on ſharing with Hammond the pleaſure and inſtruction of Father Albert's ſociety; the venerable prieſt, therefore, ſometimes a gueſt of one, ſometimes of the other of his children, as he had been accuſtomed to call them, at once encreaſed and ſhared the general felicity.

But this ſcene of happineſs was ſoon to receive an alarming and dreadful interruption. Hammond, after an illneſs originating in a ſlight and accidental cold, had every appearance of an approaching conſumption. His preſent dangerous ſymptoms, added to the benefit he had once before derived from its waters, induced his phyſicians to order him to Briſtol immediately. Mrs. Hammond and Agatha, whoſe terror and diſtreſs he in vain endeavoured to leſſen by making light of his complaints, and frequently concealing the pain he endured, attended him thither in a ſtate of mind the anguiſh of which it is not poſſible to deſcribe.

For

For a few weeks he appeared to receive benefit from the waters, and the wife and the friend whoſe exiſtence ſeemed to depend on his, had began to flatter themſelves with hopes of his recovery. But they were ſoon too fatally undeceived. The diſorder advanced with rapid ſtrides: and the phyſicians, among whom was the excellent Dr. Harley, who with Siſter Agnes had followed them to Briſtol, confeſſed to his diſtracted friends, that there was no chance of his recovery.

Hammond himſelf had long been aware of his danger; and the countenances of thoſe around him but too plainly proved the juſtice of his fears. "My Emma, my "Agatha," he ſaid, as he beheld them endeavouring to conceal their anguiſh from him, "deceive not me, deceive not your-"ſelves. I flattered you with hope while "I had a glimmering of it myſelf—but it "would now be barbarous, ſince it would "but render heavier the weight of the im-"pending ſtroke when it ſhall at laſt fall

" upon you. Support yourſelves for the " ſake of each other, my beloved friends— " for the ſake of our infants—I leave them " yet two parents, two dear, two excellent " parents, who will train them up in the " paths of virtue, and teach them ſo to live " that we ſhall hereafter meet them never to " part. Conſider, my Emma, 'tis but a " few ſhort years, and we ſhall meet and " enjoy an Eternity of bliſs together."

Mrs. Hammond, unable to bear this, caught hold of Hammond's hand with an appearance of diſtraction, and then ſcreaming violently, ran out of the room. Agatha, though too deeply a ſufferer herſelf, followed her, leaving Siſter Agnes and Dr. Harley with Hammond. She had before attributed the apparent illneſs of Mrs. Hammond to that grief which preyed on her own frame; but ſhe now diſcovered, that, either occaſioned or encreaſed by the anguiſh of her mind, ſhe had a violent and alarming fever.

Agatha returned to Hammond, and ſent

Dr.

Dr. Harley to Mrs. Hammond; but who ſhall paint the miſery of Agatha, when it was pronounced that Mrs. Hammond was in extreme danger, while a delirium which had ſeized her obliged her to be confined to her apartment!

Agatha, at this awful criſis, ſeemed to be ſupported by that very affection whence her ſorrows ſprang. While ſhe was in the room with Mrs. Hammond, or attending on her languid and almoſt dying huſband, ſhe ſeemed to loſe the remembrance of her ſufferings in her endeavours to ſooth and eaſe theirs.

"My Agatha," ſaid Hammond, calling her to his bed-ſide one morning, "I think "my ſtrength gradually forſakes me, but, "at this minute, like the departing taper I "ſeem to feel a few flaſhes of momentary "life. Hard indeed have been thy trials, "and this is more ſevere than all—God "give thee ſtrength to ſurvive it for the "ſake of my children; ſhould they loſe "their mother and thee, who ſhall protect "and be a parent to them?"

"O Hammond!" replied Agatha, "bit-
"ter indeed as are the pangs of ſurviving
"thee, I will pray for it, for thy ſake. I
"have been accuſtomed to ſorrow, till
"this heart, though it feels it, Heaven
"only knows how ſenſibly! ſeems to
"have learned to ſupport its attacks.
"Yet ſhould this trial overpower my
"ſtrength, and ſhould thy unhappy wife
"too be taken from them, there are many
"yet, bound to thee by every tie of grati-
"tude and friendſhip, that will be parents
"to thy children—St. Valorie—Iſraeli—
"Father Albert——"

"True, O! true, my Agatha," ſaid Ham-
mond, "I have performed my duty here,
"and how at this moment am I rewarded
"for it!—"The righteous ſhall not be for-
"ſaken, nor his ſeed beg their bread." No,
"I have acquired friends, who, when I am
"in the duſt, ſhall revere my memory, and
"ſhelter my children.—Agatha, my be-
"loved Agatha, give me thy hand—"O 'tis
"the only ſting of death to part from thoſe

"we

"we love!" all elſe is as nothing—death "has no other terror. I go to rejoin my "ſiſter. Methinks I ſee her pure ſpirit "hovering near me, and beckoning me to "the regions of the bleſſed!—My Agatha, "if I have ever given a pang to thy gene-"rous heart, forgive me—I meant it not— "dearer than life as you have ever been to "me. And how at this awful minute do I "bleſs you that you denied my wiſhes, that "I have no crime, no vows violated for me "to anſwer for. In one inſtance only I "have deceived you: time or accident may "perhaps reveal it; if they ſhould, you "will not love my memory the leſs, and "will forgive the deception in favour "of the motive. How little, at this mo-"ment, appears every earthly conſidera-"tion, every pleaſure of the world I am "quitting."

At this minute, Mrs. Hammond, not to be reſtrained by the entreaties of her nurſe, burſt into the room. She ran to the bed where Hammond lay, and kneeling down by

by the ſide of it, ſnatched his hand. "This," ſhe ſaid looking wildly around her, "was "Agatha's gift, and you cannot take it "from me. I will follow thee to the grave. "Think not I will bear the miſery of ſur-"viving you—no, Hammond. Yet why "ſhould you die? you have not deſerved "it—you was ſo kind to every one—ſor-"row fled at your approach. Every one "loved you. Why ſhould you die then, "Hammond?"

"My beloved Emma," ſaid Hammond, "I conſider it not as a puniſhment but ra-"ther as a bleſſing, that I am thus ſpared "the anguiſh of ſurviving thoſe I love. In "friendſhip, in marriage, one muſt be the "ſurvivor——happy, happy thoſe whom "Heaven ſhall mercifully call for firſt!— "I die in youth, it is true, but not, I truſt, "young in virtue—I have run the race that "was ſet before me, and am bidden ſooner "than I looked for to receive an everlaſting "reward.—Farewel, my Emma—my Aga-"tha, farewel—God preſerve and ſupport ye "both!

" both! I feel, even now, the hand of death,
" but it is ſweet to be ſuſtained by the pre-
" ſence of ye both; to gaze laſt on the ob-
" jects deareſt to my ſoul——a few fleeting
" years, and then, my Agatha——"

Then preſſing her hand and Mrs. Hammond's at the ſame moment to his lips, his voice faltered—he attempted, but in vain, to ſpeak again; and with a look of Chriſtion reſignation, expired without a groan.

St. Valorie, to whom an expreſs had been ſent informing him of Hammond's danger, now entered his chamber. Agatha's eyes were rivetted on Hammond, while Mrs. Hammond was looking wildly around, in the returning delirium of her fever, not comprehending that he was dead.

" I come," ſaid St. Valorie, as he entered, " to chear my benefactor, and to re-
" cover him by the cares of friendſhip.
" Where is he?"

Agatha ſpoke not, but with her finger pointed to him.

" O! ſcene of miſery!" ſaid St. Valorie,

" beyond

"beyond all I ever witneſſed! And is it "come to this? Is the dear, the generous "Hammond, the friend of all, is he gone? "—ſo young too——it cannot, cannot be. "Look up, Hammond——ſee St. Valorie "——Let the voice of him you preſerved "and ſupported call you back to life." Then ſitting down on the bed, St. Valorie covered his face with his hands, in an agony of grief.

Mrs. Hammond was now forced from the room, but no entreaties could prevail on Agatha to leave it. "Theſe minutes are "precious," ſhe ſaid, "do not rob me of "them. Look, Agnes, ſee how calm, how "ſerene, how Heavenly he looks——and is "this death?——Why would you force "me from him? Let me prolong this laſt, "laſt bleſſing! He ſeems not loſt to me, "while thus I can gaze upon his image: "O! but the mind that informed it—the "ſoul is gone for ever—Yet whither fled? "It was but now, he knew me, talked to "me.——Then whither is it gone? O! to

"be

" be happy—and I will follow him——No,
" Hammond, they ſhall not force me to
" ſurvive thee. And yet thy children—yes,
" I promiſed while yet thou couldſt hear
" my voice, I promiſed to live for them—"

By the tears of Siſter Agnes and the prayers of Dr. Harley, Agatha was at laſt induced to leave the room. She then attempted to go to Mrs. Hammond's apartment, but was prevented, and taken to her own; and there ſhe continued, during ſeveral hours, in a ſtate of apparent inſenſibility, infinitely more alarming than the moſt violent expreſſions of grief.

Mrs. Hammond, overpowered by the ſhock ſhe had ſuſtained, and already weak from illneſs, ſurvived her huſband two days only. In the lucid interval that preceded her diſſolution, Agatha, though bowed down by the weight of this ſecond and little leſs heavy affliction, made her a promiſe not leſs ſolemn than ſhe had made to Hammond, to uſe every means in her power to preſerve her life for the ſake of the ſacred truſt confided to her.

" Bleſs,

"Bleſs, bleſs you for that, for every other "mark of ineſtimable kindneſs I have re-"ceived from you, my Agatha," ſaid Mrs. Hammond. "To you I have owed one "year of perfect, unmixed happineſs; and "had my Hammond been ſpared to me, "what a life of bleſſings had been ours! "But he is gone, where even that happineſs "would appear faint and inſipid, and where "I ſhall ſoon meet him to ſhare an Eter-"nity of bliſs. For you, my ſweet friend, "ſevere as is this trial, your piety and re-"ſignation will ſupport you under it; and "a few, few years and you ſhall join us."

Not to prolong this melancholy recital, Mrs. Hammond expired a few hours after this affecting ſcene, her laſt moments cheered by the recollection of paſt virtues, and the hope of future reward. Agatha kneeled down by her bed-ſide, and raiſing her hands to Heaven, exclaimed, with a fervour which ſeemed to loſe ſight of this world, "May I die the death of the righteous, and "may my latter end be like theirs!"

Agatha,

Agatha, with Siſter Agnes and the infant Edward and Emma now quitted their melancholy lodgings, and returned to Agatha's houſe, leaving the heart-broken Mr. Ormiſtace, and St. Valorie to pay the laſt ſad duties to the remains of the lamented pair.

On the ſtone that points out the remains of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond is engraven, "They were lovely in their lives, "and in their death they were not divid-"ed," and on the ſtone a blank is left for the name of Agatha, whenever it ſhall pleaſe Heaven to call her to itſelf.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

WHILE Agatha's ſorrow was yet recent for this double ſtroke of diſtreſs, and ere the gentle hand of friendſhip had dried her tears, they were deſtined to flow from another and not leſs agonizing ſource.

Mrs. Besford called upon her one morning, and taking out a letter, "O! my dear "creature!" ſhe ſaid, "I have ſome news "that I hope will reward you for all you "have ſuffered; and therefore I would "bring it you myſelf. My ſiſter (though "I believe it was intended for my mother) "has had a letter from Sir Charles Bel-"mont."

"From my father!" ſaid Agatha, her voice faltering as her mind fluctuated between the extremes of hope and fear; "he "lives then!

"He certainly was alive at the time he "wrote

" wrote that letter; it ſtands to reaſon, you " know, that he muſt be. What he writes " to my mother is nothing more than " this."

' Sir Charles Belmont requeſts the fa-
' vour of Lady Milſon to convey the en-
' cloſed to his unfortunate daughter, if ever
' ſhe ſhould reach England, and Lady Mil-
' ſon be able to diſcover her place of reſi-
' dence. Should certain information be
' received of her death, he entreats Lady
' Milſon to open the packet, and apply the
' ſum ſpecified in it to charitable pur-
' poſes.'

Agatha took the letter, but her trembling hand had not power to break the ſeal. Read it, my Agnes, ſhe ſaid, giving it to Siſter Agnes, I cannot——I dare not.

Siſter Agnes opened it, and as ſhe glanced her eye over the firſt paragraph, Agatha ſaw her turn pale—" O! Agnes!" ſhe cried, " my fears were juſt—They are ill " —they are in danger—"

" You

"You have known many trials, my ſiſ-
"ter," ſaid Agnes, "and have borne them
"all nobly."

"O Agnes! torture me not with ſuſ-
"penſe. They are in priſon, in danger—"

"In imminent danger, my deareſt friend."

"O! let me know the extent of my
"miſery. Tell, tell me all. I am become
"familiar with diſtreſs, I have ſeen it under
"every dreadful ſhape."

"O! that the voice of friendſhip might
"ſpeak comfort to you! my ſweet ſiſter,"
ſaid Agnes. "Remember I live but for
"you; and every pang you feel, ſhall more
"than ſhare it. The danger you dreaded
"is paſt. Your excellent parents are
"happy."

"Surely, ſurely," ſaid Agatha, "the
"meaſure of my ſorrows is now full." Then
reſting her head on her hand, and fixing
her eyes on the ground, ſhe remainded mo-
tionleſs and ſeemingly inſenſible.

"O dear!" ſaid Mrs. Besford weeping
bitterly, "how ſorry I am! I thought to
"have

"have given her comfort; and though my
"ſiſter believed otherwiſe, I was almoſt
"certain Sir Charles was alive and well.
"However I can do no good, and ſo I
"will leave you—but I am very *very* ſorry
"indeed."

When Mrs. Besford was gone, Siſter Agnes endeavoured to rouze Agatha from her alarming inſenſibility; but though her tender cares at laſt ſucceeded, many days paſſed before ſhe dared ſuffer her to read the fatal packet, breaking its contents to her by degrees, and as ſhe found her able to bear the communication.

The following is a copy of the letter:

'Arm yourſelf with fortitude, my be-
'loved child. Before this can reach your
'hand, that of him who writes it will be
'cold and motionleſs for ever. Your mo-
'ther is already at peace; a few hours
'more, and I ſhall follow her. Hear the
'ſad ſtory of our fate: my end draws nigh,
'and I have not a moment to loſe.——On
'the

'the very night in which we had appointed
'to fly from this barbarous country, our
'houſe was ſurrounded by armed ruffians.
'To obtain the reſpite of a few minutes we
'barred the doors; and while I conſulted
'with a faithful domeſtic on the ſteps we
'ſhould take, your mother wrote a few
'trembling lines to inform you of our dan-
'ger, and tying them to a little box of
'jewels, conſided them to the care of one
'of the ſervants: Heaven knows if you
'ever received either!——Jaques, the ſer-
'vant on whoſe zeal and fidelity we could
'moſt depend, was the companion of our
'flight. He had accidentally diſcovered a
'private door at the foot of the ſtairs which
'led to a ſubterraneous paſſage; and aware
'of the danger which threatened us, had
'concealed his diſcovery from every one,
'till the moment in which it became ne-
'ceſſary to have recourſe to it. Jaques led
'the way, and we followed him with haſty
'and trembling ſteps. At the termination
'of the paſſage, which was half a quarter of

'a mile

'a mile in length was a trap door lightly
'covered with earth. Through this door
'we entered the road; and putting out our
'light left it ſhould be eſpied from the
'houſe, and lead the mob to purſue us,
'wandered we knew not whither during
'the greateſt part of the night.—In the
'morning, we found ourſelves near a village
'about ſix miles from Iſſoire. As we had
'not had time to put on the diſguiſes we
'had prepared, we did not venture to enter
'it, but turning to the right went into a
'ſmall wood, which we knew to be little
'frequented, and in which we believed we
'might paſs the day ſafely. Jaques, un-
'known to us, had brought a loaf with
'him; but it was with the utmoſt difficul-
'ty that we prevailed on him to ſhare it
'with us.—At night we again purſued our
'tedious journey, till your mother, ſome-
'times ſupported by me and ſometimes by
'Jaques, was ſo much exhauſted by fatigue,
'that we were compelled to remain two
'days among the ruins of a chateau. Jaques,

'in the mean time, went to a diſtant town
'to buy proviſions for us, and was fortu-
'nate enough to purchaſe a mule of ſome
'travellers whom he overtook on the road.
'With this aſſiſtance we were enabled to
'purſue our journey.—When we were, as
'we imagined, out of the reach of purſuit,
'and our perſons no longer likely to be
'recognized, we propoſed to remain at a
'cottage while Jaques returned for you.
'But the peaſants, apprehenſive for their
'own ſafety, ſhould they entertain Nobles,
'as they ſaid our appearance proved us to
'be, would not ſuffer us to remain with
'them; we were therefore obliged to con-
'tinue our journey, till we ſhould meet with
'ſome one kind enough to ſhelter us. At
'laſt to our equal ſurprize and comfort, we
'were met and accoſted by a perſon in the
'garb of a ſhepherd, whom I inſtantly re-
'membered to be the Baron de ———
'whom I had formerly known at Paris, and
'from whom, during my travels in the
'early part of my life, I had received many

marks

'marks of friendſhip. He informed me,
'that having loſt his wife and only ſon
'ſome years previous to the Revolution, he
'had determined to retire from ſociety;
'and that concealing his name and quality,
'he had ſince lived as a ſhepherd. His hut
'was many miles diſtant from any other
'dwelling; and this, added to the idea ge-
'nerally entertained among his neighbours,
'from his ſhunning as much as poſſible
'any intercourſe with them, that his intel-
'lects were deranged, had enabled him to
'give ſhelter to many unfortunate Nobles
'who had been obliged to conceal them-
'ſelves from popular fury, and whom he
'had diſcovered in his daily rambles. We
'remained at the Baron's cottage, while
'Jaques was diſpatched to bring our be-
'loved child and Siſter Agnes to us. But
'alas! our faithful Jaques returned no more.
'What became of him we never heard; yet
'it is but too probable, that his connection
'with us was diſcovered, and that his fide-
'lity coſt him his life. After remaining at

'the Baron's hoſpitable dwelling more than
'a fortnight, we were obliged to leave it;
'our reſidence there having been remarked
'by ſome caſual viſitors, from whom,
'though he invented a ſtory which ſatisfied
'them at the time, he would have been in
'great danger had we continued longer
'with him.—Miſerable on account of our
'ſeparation from you, we once had thoughts
'of returning to Iſſoire, to take you from
'the convent; but the certainty of the
'danger to which we ſhould by this means
'expoſe you as well as ourſelves, deterred
'us from putting the raſh ſcheme in exe-
'cution. After taking leave of the Baron,
'we determined to continue our journey to-
'wards Bourdeaux, and from thence to
'embark for England, whither we were
'aſſured you would follow us, whenever
'you ſhould be compelled to forſake the
'convent. But we had not proceeded more
'than twelve miles after our departure from
'the Baron's when our mule dropped down
'and died. This loſs was the more diſ-

'treſſing,

'treſſing, as there was little probability that
'we ſhould have an opportunity of pur-
'chaſing another; while my poor Agatha's
'inability to purſue our journey on foot,
'except by very ſhort ſtages, would render
'it ſo tedious, that the money we had with
'us muſt be expended before we reached
'England. We had, however, no choice
'to make; and were obliged to travel on
'foot, without any attendant or guide,
'ignorant of the country through which
'we paſſed, and after loſing ourſelves in
'the trackleſs wilds of immenſe foreſts.—
'One fatal evening, paſſing near the ſkirts
'of a foreſt, I obſerved a man at ſome diſ-
'tance behind us, who appeared to be fol-
'lowing and endeavouring to overtake us.
'Lady Belmont was leaning on my arm
'and at my entreaty attempting to quicken
'her pace, till, ſick with fatigue, ſhe ſtop-
'ped, confeſſing ſhe could walk no farther.
'On our ſtopping, the man came up to us,
'and looking in my Agatha's face with an
'appearance of inquiſitiveneſs, "My lady

'ſeems fatigued," ſaid he. Alas! I am,
'ſaid Lady Belmont. Nature is quite worn
'out. "My cottage is at hand," replied the
'man, "will you pleaſe to ſtep into it, and
'reſt you for the night?"——Countenances
'are ſometimes deceitful, but there are fea-
'tures which cannot be miſtaken; which,
'however hypocriſy may ſeek to maſque
'with a ſmile, will betray the villain. The
'character of our pretended friend was but
'too viſible, and I immediately rejected his
'offer, though with civility. On his re-
'peating it more urgently, I replied, that I
'had relations at a neighbouring town to
'whom I had promiſed to return that
'night, and who would be alarmed at our
'abſence; while your unhappy mother, in
'her preſent ſufferings loſing all ſenſe of
'danger, ſupplicated me to grant his re-
'queſt. Do try to prevail on my Lord,
'madam, added the wretch, my houſe is
'always open to the weary traveller——I
'want no reward.——God will give you
'one, good man, ſaid Lady Belmont, af-

'fected

'fected by his pretended kindneſs. In vain
'I repeated the neceſſity of returning to our
'friends; the man was but the more urgent,
'and Lady Belmont joined her prayers to
'his. He then ran to the houſe, which, he
'ſaid, was but a few paces diſtant, promiſ-
'ing to return with his ſon who would aſ-
'ſiſt in ſupporting the lady. The moment
'he had left us, I conjured Agatha to aſ-
'ſume all the ſtrength and courage poſſible,
'and to fly, while it was yet in our power,
'aſſuring her that we were betrayed. She
'attempted to walk, but overcome by fa-
'tigue and terror, fainted in my arms.
'The man returned in a few minutes in
'company with his ſon, whoſe appearance
'was that of a bravo. Convinced that re-
'ſiſtance was now impoſſible, and might
'encreaſe inſtead of averting our danger, I
'pretended to have yielded to his perſua-
'ſions, and thanked him for his proffered
'aſſiſtance. They helped me to carry Lady
'Belmont into the houſe, in which we
'found an old woman and her daughter, the

'only other perſons we ſaw. The old wo-
'man in a hoarſe voice bid us welcome,
'and when Lady Belmont was recovered,
'brought a loaf and ſet before us, deſiring
'us to ſup with them. It now grew dark,
'and one ſmall candle was lighted and put
'on the table. The old man then reminded
'his wife that ſhe had forgot the wine. She
'roſe immediately, but as ſhe was ſome
'time buſied in preparing it, during which
'my hoſt watched me with attention, ap-
'parently anxious that I ſhould not obſerve
'her motions, I determined not to taſte it;
'and on their offering it to me, declared,
'that neither my wife nor I ever drank
'wine of any kind, that water was our only
'beverage, and had been for years. They
'looked diſappointed, but ſaid nothing.—
'At night we were ſhewn into a ſquare
'room next to that where we had ſupped,
'in which was a bed with linen furniture,
'which the daughter very aſſiduouſly warm-
'ed for us, and then left us. I looked at
'the door, as we entered the chamber, and

'obſerved

'obſerved that it opened with an iron latch,
'and that there was no faſtening on either
'ſide of it. By accident when we were
'packing up our plate and other valuables,
'I had put a piece of cord into my poc-
'ket; with this I tied the latch to the ſta-
'ple, and afterwards took the further pre-
'caution of putting a pen-knife in ſuch a
'manner into the ſtaple, that every attempt
'to lift up the latch on the other ſide
'would be fruitleſs. I then examined the
'window, in hopes that, as the room was
'on a ground floor, it would be poſſible
'to eſcape from thence; but it was grated
'with iron bars placed ſo near to each
'other that ſcarcely a hand could have
'paſſed between them. The girl had left
'us part of a ſmall candle, burned already
'ſo low that it could not laſt half an hour.
'Lady Belmont, by my advice, did not un-
'dreſs herſelf but lay down in her cloaths;
'and exhauſted by fatigue and pain, in ſpite
'of our danger which I did not attempt to
'conceal from her, dropped aſleep. I now

'examined the room, and ſaw in one cor-
'ner of it upon the floor, a ſmall torn bit
'of fine lace, and near it ſome drops of
'blood which ſeemed to have been at-
'tempted to be ſcraped off with a knife.
'Examining the boards one by one, I
'obſerved that one of them as I ſtepped on
'it was looſer than the reſt, and on looking
'nearer, I ſaw an iron nail in the middle
'of it, higher and larger than was neceſſary
'to faſten the flooring. I took hold of it,
'and to my aſtoniſhment the board was
'lifted up immediately, and diſcovered a
'vault beneath it, the deſcent into which
'was by a rough ladder. I took the ſmall
'remains of candle, carrying it with the
'utmoſt care leſt it ſhould go out before
'I returned, and deſcending the ladder, en-
'tered a place the horrors of which ex-
'ceeded all that imagination can form. It
'had the appearance of the vault of a
'church, and contained the dead bodies
'of the murdered; one, a young man,
'appeared to be recently dead; his finger

'was

'was cut off, probably to take a ring from
'it, but no other marks of violence were
'viſible on the body: perhaps he had died
'by poiſon—by the preparation offered to
'*us* under the name of wine. I now heard
'ſomething move behind me, and believ-
'ing the aſſaſſins might have ſome other
'communication with this ſcene of horrors
'beſides the trap door through which I
'entered it, I haſtened to aſcend the lad-
'der to defend my beloved wife, or periſh
'with her; but looking back, I found the
'noiſe proceeded from ſomething under-
'neath one of the bodies, and immediately
'afterwards I ſaw it was a huge rat whom
'the noiſe of my entrance had diſturbed in
'his nocturnal feaſt. I once more, therefore,
'ventured to look around to diſcover if the
'vault had any opening by which we might
'eſcape; but finding none, returned with-
'out loſs of time up the ladder, obſerving
'my light almoſt expiring. In order to
'prolong it for a few moments, I ſcraped
'the tallow that had fallen on the candle-

'ſtick and put it near the wick. When I 'came into the chamber, I heard voices 'ſpeaking in a whiſper on the other ſide 'of the door, and perceived ſome one at-'tempting to ſtir the latch. I awoke Lady 'Belmont, and conjured her to riſe with-'out delay, if ſhe would ſave her life and 'mine; and when ſhe had ariſen from the 'bed, I drew my knife out of the ſtaple, 'cut the cord with which I had tied it, and, 'at the ſame inſtant, ſet fire to the curtains 'of the bed. The linen was in a blaze in 'a moment. Opening now the door, I 'ſcreamed fire. The man and his ſon who 'were in the adjoining room, and ſaw the 'flames burſt forth as the door opened, ran 'away in terror, calling to the women to 'ſave themſelves while it was poſſible. 'Taking Lady Belmont's arm, I ran to the 'houſe door, and was unbarring it when 'the men returned. Save yourſelves, good 'people, I exclaimed, your houſe is in 'flames, ſave yourſelves. Then paſſing 'through the door without interruption,

'we fled from the execrable ſpot. But the 'danger we believed at an end, ſtill pur- 'ſued us. My unhappy wife, too ill to 'continue our journey, was obliged to re- 'main in the foreſt two days, ſupported only 'by wild fruits and herbs, and a loaf of coarſe 'bread which I purchaſed for her from a '*beggar*. At laſt, recovering her fatigue in 'ſome meaſure, we attempted to proceed, 'but had ſcarcely left the foreſt, when we 'were ſeized by the wretch from whoſe de- 'teſtable habitation we had eſcaped, and 'other Officers of Juſtice, devoted, as it 'ſhould ſeem, to him. "Thoſe are they," 'he exclaimed on ſeeing us, "that is the 'Chevalier Belmont and his Lady from 'Iſſoire. I diſcovered them, and would 'have ſecured them for you, but they ſet 'fire to my houſe and eſcaped. Citizens, 'ſeize them——they are Ariſtocrats." We 'were bound and taken to priſon, where we 'underwent an examination which proved 'the juſtice exerciſed in this country of 'Liberty. The officer aſked me if I could

'deny

'deny that I was Sir Charles Belmont. I 'replied, that guilty of no crime, I did not 'wiſh to deny it. You are accuſed, pur- 'ſued he, of diſtributing money among the 'inhabitants of Iſſoire, through the hands 'of nuns, in order to ſpread fanaticiſm 'and tyranny. I anſwered, that pure cha- tity, and no ſiniſter motives had prompt- 'ed my diſtributions; and that, with re- 'gard to the wretch at whoſe inſtigation 'and by whoſe orders I had been ſeized, 'were his character known, no charges he 'could bring againſt me would be thought 'to deſerve credit, ſince he was an aſſaſſin '—a murderer. I then declared, that I 'had ſeen the bodies of murdered perſons 'in a vault under his houſe, and if ſuffer- 'ed to do ſo, and that part of the building 'had eſcaped the flames, would conduct 'the officer to it, and make him an eye- 'witneſs of the truth of my aſſertions. Do 'you hear Citizens, ſaid the wretch un- 'moved by the charge, do you hear how 'Ariſtocrats can lie, and how they would

'blacken

'blacken every good patriot? Let him go
'to my houſe, and ſhew you, if he can,
'the truth of a tittle of what he has the ef-
'frontery to ſay. But no, let him rather
'be impriſoned, and thus be condemn-
'ed to expiate the atrocity of his guilt.
'Wretch! Ariſtocrat! continued he, look-
'ing undauntedly in my face, dare you
'prove your aſſertions? I dare and will, I
'replied, if ſuffered to do ſo. Come then,
'Citizens, ſaid he, let us go inſtantly; we
'will prove whether the word of an Ariſto-
'crat or a patriot is to be relied on. No,
'no, they all exclaimed in a breath, we
'know you, you are a good patriot—let
'him be executed. This part of my ſen-
'tence was, however, agreed to be deferred,
'and I was ordered to be taken with my
'unhappy wife to a dungeon in the priſon.
'The cell in which we were confined was
'damp, cold, and dark, and the provi-
'ſions allowed us ſcarcely ſufficient to ſup-
'port nature. To weep with each other,
'and pray for a happier fate to our beloved
'child,

'child, were our only comforts: the pre-
'ſent was miſerable, the future hopeleſs,
'and memory reverting to paſt bleſſings,
'but encreaſed our torture. Death would
'have been welcome to us, could we have
'died together; but to ſurvive each other
'was an agony we could not bear the
'thought of. During ſeveral months we
'were ſuffered to remain unnoticed, except
'by the gaoler who brought us our ſcanty
'ſupply of food, and who never ſpoke un-
'leſs it were to revile us, and brand us with
'the name moſt odious in his eſtimation—
'Ariſtocrat. Yet even the little comfort
'we enjoyed was ſoon to be denied us. The
'barbarous Commandant of the priſon,
'under a pretended charge of conſpiracy,
'ordered us to be confined in ſeparate
'cells. O! let your imagination paint our
'feelings at theſe dreadful moments, my
'child—yet rather, let it not paint them:
'the very thought is madneſs. It ſeemed
'now a crime to have lamented our fate
'while we were ſuffered to ſhare it toge-
'ther;

'ther; and what appeared a ſtate of miſery
'then, would have been happineſs now.
'On our knees we implored our inhuman
'gaoler not to divide us; and declared,
'binding our aſſeverations with the moſt
'ſolemn oaths, that we had formed no plot,
'were guilty of no crime againſt the go-
'vernment or people; wiſhing but to linger
'out the laſt of our wretched days together.
'He was deaf to our entreaties, and my
'Agatha, the wife of my boſom, partner
'of my ſoul, was torn from my arms. It
'was in vain that I implored him to in-
'form me from time to time if ſhe yet
'lived; he exulted in and ridiculed my an-
'guiſh, and, aſking me if I imagined him
'a go-between in our plots, refuſed to give
'me any tidings of her.—One night as I
'conjectured near the hour of midnight, I
'heard a voice that ſeemed to be my Aga-
'tha's though changed by madneſs, ſinging
'wildly and talking alternately. On a
'ſudden it ceaſed, and I heard loud and
'repeated ſcreams. The dreadful thought

'ſtruck

'ſtruck me that they were murdering her;
'and frantic with terror and diſtreſs, I re-
'peated her name, calling to her to anſwer
'me for mercy's ſake, if ſhe would ſave me
'from diſtraction. She ſeemed to have
'heard me, for immediately afterwards I
'could diſtinguiſh her repeating my name,
'and then ſinging as before. The certain-
'ty that ſhe yet lived, after the horrid idea
'excited by her ſcreams, was a conſolation
'ſo great, that it deſtroyed for ſome mi-
'nutes the ſenſe of our paſt and preſent
'ſufferings; yet when again my imagination
'beheld her the ſolitary inmate of a dun-
'geon, bereft of reaſon, inſulted perhaps
'by the wretch who guarded her, no friend
'near her whoſe ſoothing voice might calm
'her diſtracted mind, or give her comfort
'in her lucid intervals, my miſery ſeemed
'more exquiſite than ever, and with a fer-
'vour that I hope was no crime, I implor-
'ed Heaven to take us both from a world
'of horrors.—The next morning I was ſur-
'prized by obſerving that the perſon whoſe

'office

'office it was to bring me my food, was 'changed, and his place ſupplied by a 'young man whoſe countenance bore evi-'dent marks of a gentle and compaſſionate 'heart. I ventured to addreſs him, and 'to implore that, if it were in his power, 'he would obtain permiſſion for me to be 'confined in the ſame cell with a female 'priſoner who was my wife, and whom her 'diſtreſſes, added to her ſeparation from 'me, had driven out of her ſenſes. He 'appeared to ſympathize in my affliction, 'and promiſed to obtain permiſſion of the 'new Commandant of the priſon to grant 'my requeſt, if it was poſſible. He informed 'me that all thoſe who had laſt had charge 'of the priſoners had been executed on 'a ſuſpicion of their having ſuffered ſome 'of them to eſcape. Then bidding me be 'comforted, and aſſuring me he would do 'all in his power to render my confinement 'eaſy, he left me.—In about an hour he 'returned, leading with him your dear and 'unhappy mother. But O! my child,

'how

'how was ſhe changed! Every trace of her
'former beauty was gone—Her eyes, wild
'and glaſſy, ſeemed to turn on the objects
'around her without beholding them. She
'did not know me; and when flying to her,
'I offered to preſs her to my heart, ſhe re-
'pulſed me with horror; and turning to
'the young man, bid him ſave her from
'the wretch that murdered firſt her child,
'and then her huſband. And yet, continued
'ſhe, ſtill addreſſing herſelf to him, that
'child was ſuch a jewel, that nothing leſs
'than a mother's inſatiate cruelty could
'have devoted her to death. She was ſo
'good, ſo gentle, ſo kind to all—nay, the
'very murderers themſelves kiſſed the cold
'ſtones ſhe kneeled on. But it was a vow
'that did it all; and all our paſt and pre-
'ſent ſorrows come to this.—And then I
'was diſobedient—that's yet another—but
'my huſband, my poor huſband—if he
'was here I ſhould know him, I think I
'ſhould——becauſe you know—No—now
'tis all gone again. Then putting her
'hand

'hand to her forehead, ſhe ſeemed to have
'loſt the little recollection ſhe had the mi-
'nute before. The young man wiped away
'the tears that trickled down his cheeks,
'and telling me that he would try to get a
'doctor for the poor lady, left us, and bar-
'red the door. I endeavoured in vain to
'make my Agatha recollect me—I ſeemed
'an object of horror and averſion to her,
'and for three days that ſhe remained in
'this diſtracted ſtate, I was the moſt miſer-
'able of beings. The young man, whoſe
'heart ſeemed ill ſuited to his ſituation, in-
'formed me with much regret, that he
'could obtain no advice for the lady, and
'that he had nearly involved himſelf in dan-
'ger by deſiring it. I conjured him to be
'careful of his own ſafety, and not to ha-
'zard his life for thoſe, the term of whoſe
'exiſtence would be ſhort, and their ſor-
'rows ſoon at an end.——By degrees my
'Agatha's ſenſes returned; but remember-
'ing the averſion with which ſhe had be-
'held me, ſhe hourly implored forgiveneſs

'for

'for it of Heaven and of me as of a crime
'that lay heavy at her heart. In vain did I
'endeavour to reconcile her to herſelf; in
'vain aſſured her that ſhe was innocent of
'any intentional unkindneſs, that it was
'uſual in all whoſe illneſs had given a tem-
'porary diſorder to the brain, to regard
'with diſlike thoſe they held deareſt in
'health: nothing could efface this painful
'impreſſion. But her fine faculties were
'never after abſolutely perfect. A melan-
'choly ſucceeded her diſtraction, and prey-
'ing on her frame, took her from me, it is
'now two months ſince. The impoſſibili-
'ty of procuring medicines to aſſuage the
'pains ſhe ſuffered, was an aggravation of
'my diſtreſs. I will not deſcribe our
'parting ſcene—your heart could not ſup-
'port it—I will only ſay, that your name,
'and a bleſſing on it, were the laſt *laſt*
'words ſhe uttered. Her lifeleſs body
'was ſuffered to remain two days in
'my cell. Two days, my child, did I
'ſpend in prayer over her remains—in
'holding her clay-cold hand between mine

'——in

'—in kiſſing the ring that had in happier 'days united us. I cut off a lock of her 'hair—I have ſince worn it at my heart— 'I ſend it to you—relic how precious!— 'When they came to take her from me, I 'conjured that ſhe might have Chriſtian 'burial. But my requeſt was ſcoffed at, 'and I was told that *death was Eternal 'Sleep!*—Eternal may it be to them whoſe 'crimes make that ſleep deſirable!—for us, 'who look to be heirs of everlaſting *Bliſs*, 'the idea of annihilation is dreadful. No! 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and 'though after this life worms deſtroy my 'body, yet in my fleſh ſhall I ſee God. 'Then ſhall be brought to paſs the ſaying 'that is written, *Death* is ſwallowed up in '*Victory*. O Death! where is thy ſting? 'O Grave! where is thy victory?———

'My minutes are now few. I am ſen- 'tenced to execution, after an examination 'ſimilar to that at my entrance into the pri- 'ſon. But armed by the truths of *Chriſti- 'anity*, I heard my ſentence without diſ- 'may, and ſhall go with pious tranſport,

'not

'not to *Eternal Sleep* but to *Eternal Hap-*
'*pineſs!*——————

'Should this ever reach your hands, my
'dear, my beloved child, let not your ſpi-
'rits ſink under its affliction for our ſor-
'rows: Remember they will then be paſt,
'and we ſhall be happy.

'When the troubles in this wretched
'country began, I placed ten thouſand
'pounds in the Engliſh funds, through the
'means of Meſſrs. Simpſon and Watford,
'Bankers, at Exeter, to whom I gave a
'letter of Attorney for the purpoſe, and,
'through whoſe means you will duly re-
'ceive it. This is all I have left to be-
'queath to you.

'The charitable perſon who ſends this
'bids me be brief.

'Farewell, my Agatha, my beloved
'child, farewell—but not for ever---fare-
'well till in the Regions of the Bleſſed we
'inherit fulneſs of joy and pleaſure for
'evermore.

'CHARLES BELMONT.'

At

At the end of this was written in another hand:

'The perſon who at the hazard of his 'life ventures to ſend this Packet, informs 'the daughter of the unfortunate Chevalier Belmont, that her father expired under the axe of the Guillotine, this morning at the hour of Eleven. He met his 'fate with fortitude and pious reſignation."

Many months paſſed before Agatha recovered the ſhock ſhe ſuſtained on reading this pathetic narrative: but hers was the ſorrow of a gentle ſpirit; it was plaintive rather than paſſionate; and though deeply-rooted, calm and reſigned. In the ſoothing cares of Siſter Agnes ſhe found relief; and with the meekneſs of a chriſtian, ſhe ſought inſtead of ſpurning comfort. She had, beſides, long placed her affections on another and a better world.

Some months after this fatal letter arrived, ſhe ſent for the young man from whom ſhe had received the ſmall fortune on which ſhe had hitherto lived, to inſiſt upon his

accepting the ſum his probity had induced him to bring to her, and which, as no mention was made of it in her father's letter, ſhe was aſſured he did not intend to receive.

On her urging his acceptance of it, Mr. Smith at laſt acknowledged, that the ſtory was a fiction, invented by Mr. Hammond, who wiſhed to ſpare her the pain of knowing herſelf indebted to others for ſupport: that Mr. Ormiſtace was a party in the deceit, Mr. Hammond being under a neceſſity of diſcloſing the affair to him, in order to prevent his enquiries leading to a ſuſpicion of the truth, and that he promiſed to keep the ſecret on condition of being allowed to add five hundred pounds to the intended ſum.

Agatha deeply affected by this new inſtance of Hammond's delicate generoſity, could only reply to Mr. Smith by her tears. This, therefore, was the diſcovery to which Hammond alluded in his laſt moments, and renewing with it the recollection of that dreadful day, it was long before ſhe recovered

recovered the patient reſignation ſhe had began to feel.

But time, friendſhip, and Religion "with "healing on its wings," have at laſt, in ſome meaſure, reſtored her tranquility. She has inſtituted a ſchool for orphans near her habitation; which ſhe daily viſits and inſpects. She has another little ſociety of widows, penſioned by her bounty; beſides innumerable other occaſional charities, to which ſhe liberally contributes. Her mind will ſometimes revert to ſcenes paſt never to return; but ſhe endeavours to chace the painful remembrance, nor ſuffers herſelf to indulge in the luxury of ſorrow; and bleſt with the friendſhip of the tender and affectionate Siſter Agnes; with the maternal regard of Madame St. Clermont, who has promiſed never again to leave her; bleſt with the pious precepts of the kind Father Albert, with the friendſhip and ſociety of the amiable though eccentric Mr. Ormiſtace, by whom ſhe is rather idolized than loved, and that of Mr. Crawford and his eſtimable family; bleſt with the prayers of

the poor, and the eſteem of all; enjoying the ſmiles of the infant Edward and Emma, who already begin to liſp their gratitude to their more than mother; and, above all, bleſt with a ſpotleſs and a ſelf-approving heart, ſhe leads a life of peaceful reſignation here, in the firm hope and aſſurance of Eternal Happineſs hereafter.

"Write, my friend," ſaid Agatha to the Author of this work, "write my melancholy ſtory, and, ſince you wiſh it, publiſh it to the world. If it teach the young, "that the conqueſt of ourſelves, arduous "as it appears, is generally attainable, and "often rewarded in that very attainment; "if it teach them and all, that there are "few trials, however ſevere, but may be "ſupported with the aid of Religion and a "conſcience clear of reproach; if it teach "this—your Agatha will not have lived, "ſhe will not have ſuffered in vain."

FINIS.

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